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THE
GREAT TEXTS OF THE BIBLE

THE GREAT TEXTS OF THE BIBLE

EDITED BY THE REV.

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EDITOR OF "THE EXPOSITORY TIMES" "THE DICTIONARY OF THE BIBLE"
"THE DICTIONARY OF CHRIST AND THE GOSPELS" AND
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No Room.

And she brought forth her firstborn son; and she wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.—Luke ii. 7.

There are not many texts in the Bible with which Christians, from the highest to the lowest, from the very aged to the young child who can but just speak, are more familiar than they are with this. We learn more or less about our Lord's cradle almost as soon as we are out of our own cradles. That one part of the gospel history we know, even when the rest has quite slipped out of our minds.

Christ's mother and Joseph had been living at their home at Nazareth when, according to St. Luke's Gospel, orders were given for one of those censuses, or enrolments of the people, which were sometimes used in ancient days as a basis for the imposition of a poll-tax. In such cases, people were enrolled according to their ancestry and the region from which they originally came; and thus it was that "Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judæa, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David; to enrol himself with Mary who was betrothed to him, being great with child."

The little town—it was no more than what we should call a village—was crowded with people, many of whom had come for the same purpose and claimed the same exalted lineage; the inn or guest-chamber—there was rarely more than one in such small places—was already crowded; this carpenter and his young bride were people of no particular importance and needed no special consideration, still less did the unborn Child; and so, as there was no room for them among the human guests, they had to find shelter in the stable hard by, among the beasts.

¶ It used to be brought as an objection against the trustworthiness of St. Luke's Gospel that there was no evidence other than his that such an enrolment was known at that time or in that region. Why the evidence of this ancient document should be regarded as less valuable than that of another on such a point did not appear; but at any rate it no longer matters. Within the last few years records have been discovered, on fragments of papyrus found in the rubbish-heaps of old Egyptian towns, which prove conclusively that such enrolments did take place in that time and region; and of this objection we shall doubtless hear no more.[1]

I

No Room in the Inn.

1. The story of the Nativity is not only very beautiful, as surely all will be willing to confess; it is historically true, a thing that some, even quite recently, have shown themselves eager to deny. Of course, to the faithful soul the whole story is convincing. The man who has seen the heavens opening in mercy and hope above his dark and sin-bound life finds no difficulty in believing that the glory of the Lord broke forth before men's very eyes what time the Saviour of the world began His earthly life. The man who year after year has been led by the Light of the World across the wastes and through the dark places of life does not ask the astronomers to give him permission to believe in the Star of Bethlehem. But apart from such a gracious predisposition to receive this lovely story, we find touches in it that a master of fiction, much less a simple, plain-minded man, could surely never have given to it. There are points in the story that would never have occurred to the weaver of a tale. And notable amongst them is St. Luke's simple statement that Mary in the hour of her need was shut out from such comfort and shelter as the inn at Bethlehem might have afforded. The Gospels were written by those who believed in Jesus as the Son of God. St. Luke was writing of the Nativity of his Lord, the birthday of the King of kings. And he pictures Him in that hour at the mercy of untoward circumstance. He is born in a stable and cradled in a manger. He could not have had a lowlier, a less kingly entrance

[1] Bishop W. E. Collins, *Hours of Insight*, 112.

into the world than that. There seems to be but one explanation of these apparently unpropitious details of the story, and that is that they are true.

¶ One of the most absent-minded people I ever knew was a more or less distinguished ecclesiastic at whose house I used to visit as a child. He had won some fame in his youth as a poet, and he was, when I remember him, a preacher of some force; but he could not be depended upon in that capacity. Whatever he was interested in at the moment he preached about, and he had the power of being interested in very dreary things. His sermons were like reveries; indeed, his whole rendering of the service was that of a man who was reading a book to himself and often finding it unexpectedly beautiful and interesting. The result was sometimes startling, because one felt as if one had never heard the familiar words before. I remember his reading the account of the Nativity in a wonderfully feeling manner, "because there was no room for them in the inn." I do not know how the effect was communicated; it was delivered with a half-mournful, half-incredulous smile. If those who refused them admittance had only known what they were doing.[1]

2. To us, the first thought that would be suggested by being relegated to the stable would be that of humiliation: it would be degrading to be sent out amongst the beasts; and the second thought would be that of privation: it would be hard to be condemned to no better accommodation than that. But that idea would scarcely have occurred to travellers in those lands. In those lands, the inn or guest-chamber will be a large room or shed built of rough stones and mud, or a cave partly dug out of the earth, with an earthen floor, more like an English cow-house than anything else; and the stable may either be actually a part of the same cave or building, or a similar one close at hand. Anyhow, the accommodation is much the same, and you camp on the cleanest spot you can find of the earthen or stony floor, and make yourself comfortable as best you can; so that—and this is the important point to keep in mind—the real difference between the inn and the stable was rather in the company than in the accommodation. In some ways the stable had its advantages. It was perhaps quieter, it was certainly more secluded; possibly it was not less comfortable with the oxen and the asses than it

[1] A. C. Benson, *Along the Road*, 286.

would have been in the inn; certainly the manger—a mere recess about half-way up the wall, where the fodder was stored—made a safer crib for the Holy Babe than the crowded floor of the guest-chamber, with hardly an inch to spare anywhere. Yes, nature did its best for Him, and He found a shelter amongst the beasts when men cast Him out; but that does not alter the fact that when the Lord of Glory came to be born on this earth, not even a common guest-chamber could find room for Him. He was born in the stable and cradled in a manger, "because there was no room for him in the inn."

¶ When I was travelling in Armenia and Kurdistan some three years ago, it befell me more than once or twice to have to spend the night in the stable, "because there was no room in the inn"; and the difference in actual accommodation was not so great as you might have supposed. The East Syrian people amongst whom I was travelling part of the time are very closely allied in race to the inhabitants of Palestine in the time of our Lord, and the customs are much the same still.[1]

¶ I never felt the full pathos of the scene of the birth of Jesus till, standing one day in a room of an old inn in the market-town of Eisleben, in Central Germany, I was told that on that very spot, four centuries ago, amidst the noise of a market-day and the bustle of a public-house, the wife of the poor miner, Hans Luther, who happened to be there on business, being surprised like Mary with sudden distress, brought forth in sorrow and poverty the child who was to become Martin Luther, the hero of the Reformation, and the maker of modern Europe.[2]

3. The birth in the manger because there was no room in the inn was natural. The fact that the child who was born was He whom Christendom celebrates does not make the indifference of Bethlehem a peculiar crime. The men of that time were not different from us all. They did not know. God, who taught through this His Son that, when we give alms, we should not sound a trumpet before us, gave His great gift with the like simplicity. When He gave His Son, He sent no heralds. The men to whom He came were busy with the cares which have always busied men. They were like ourselves, eager over what have always been recognized as great questions—questions about taxa-

[1] Bishop W. E. Collins, *Hours of Insight*, 114.
[2] J. Stalker, *The Life of Jesus Christ*, 12.

tion, national independence, a world empire, and singularly careless as to where the children are born.

¶ We need to make room amid the crowding thoughts for the coming of the Lord of life and light. And some day, when we have done it, there will be a country which has a national religion, because there will be a country which believes in the Incarnation. It will realize something more of the mighty mystery that flesh and blood are the temple of the Holy Spirit. It will realize how our souls, which come hither to tabernacle in flesh a little time, give us kindred with the Christ who was born among us. And we shall make room amid our crowding and eager thoughts for Him to come in us.[1]

4. The birth in the manger was of His own ordering. It was the Divine Babe's will to be born in such a place as that, and therefore He so ordered matters that His parents should not come to the inn till it was full, and that there should be no other place but that stable where they should lodge. It was not chance, God forbid! It was the will of the unborn Infant Himself. For He it is who ordereth all things in heaven and earth. He would be born in the city of David, because He was the Son of David, the King of Israel, and was to fulfil all the prophecies; He would not be born in royal state or comfort as the Son of David might be expected to be, because He was to save us by suffering and humility.

¶ Whilst our Lord Jesus Christ was yet in the bosom of the Father, before He took our nature, He was free from all liability of suffering, and was under no call to suffer for men, except the importunate call of His own everlasting love; yet after He took our nature, and became the man Jesus Christ, He actually stood Himself within the righteous liability of suffering, not indeed on account of any flaw in His spotless holiness, but as a participator of that flesh which lay under the sentence of sorrow and death; and being now engulfed in the horrible pit along with all the others, He could only deliver them by being first delivered Himself, and thus opening a passage for them to follow Him by; as a man who casts himself into an enclosed dungeon which has no outlet in order to save a number of others whom he sees immured there, and when he is in, forces a passage through the wall, by dashing himself against it, to the great injury of his person. His coming into the dungeon is a voluntary act, but after he is there, he is

[1] A. C. Welch.

liable to the discomforts of the dungeon by necessity, until he breaks through.[1]

II.

No Room in the World.

1. What was true of the Lord's entrance upon life was true of all His later life also. There never was one amongst the sons of men who was so truly human as He; for in us humanity is marred and blurred by so much that is weak and low and base, and not truly human at all; but He who was the most truly Man of all men was all His life a stranger among men: "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." It was not that He was in any sense a recluse, or that He shrank from human society; indeed, it was all the other way—He yearned for companionship. The very first act of His public life was to draw to His side a little company of friends who were like-minded with Himself, and they were His companions ever after. Within this circle there were some who were specially dear to Him; and when He was about to face the darker agony of life He always invited them to accompany Him, and threw Himself on their sympathy. He was at home at the wedding feast and in the house of Simon the Pharisee and at the table of Levi the publican, and many another; indeed, when His enemies were casting about for some accusation against Him, they did not accuse Him of being inhuman like the ascetic John the Baptist, but called Him rather "a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners." And yet, all His life He was alone; He was despised and rejected of men. He was occupied in "business" that—so men chose to think—they had no interest in; and so—they had no room for Him. When He had preached at Nazareth, where He was brought up, they arose and thrust Him out of the city. At Capernaum, when they saw the mighty works that He did on them that were diseased, they came and besought Him to depart out of their coasts. He passed through Samaria, and the Samaritans would not receive Him. Wherever He went He was a homeless wanderer. "The foxes have holes," He said, "and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where

[1] Thomas Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent*, 263.

to lay his head." And the solitude was all the greater as the end drew near. Jerusalem would have none of Him; one of His own little company covenanted to betray Him. He went into the Garden that He might face all that was coming and be ready for it, taking the three to watch and pray with Him; but in the last resort not even they could help Him: He must needs tread the winepress alone. And so the rulers compassed His destruction, and the Romans scourged Him and delivered Him to be crucified, and at length He hung there upon the cross, isolated between heaven and earth, naked, forsaken and alone. Truly, while He was on earth there was no room for Him.

¶ A marvellous great world it is, and there is room in it for many things; room for wealth, ambition, pride, show, pleasure; room for trade, society, dissipation; room for powers, kingdoms, armies, and their wars; but for Him there is the smallest room possible; room in the stable but not in the inn. There He begins to breathe, and at that point introduces Himself into His human life as a resident of our world—the greatest and most blessed event, humble as the guise of it may be, that has ever transpired among mortals. If it be a wonder to men's eyes and ears, a wonder even to science itself, when the flaming air-stone pitches into our world, as a stranger newly arrived out of parts unknown in the sky, what shall we think of the more transcendent fact, that the Eternal Son of God is born into the world; that, proceeding forth from the Father, not being of our system or sphere, not of the world, He has come as a Holy Thing into it—God manifest in the flesh, the Word made flesh, a new Divine Man, closeted in humanity, there to abide and work until He has restored the race itself to God? Nor is this wonderful annunciation any the less welcome, or any the less worthy to be celebrated by the hallelujahs of angels and men, that the glorious visitant begins to breathe in a stall. Was there not a certain propriety in such a beginning, considered as the first chapter and symbol of His whole history, as the Saviour and Redeemer of mankind?[1]

2. What does the world offer in place of a room in the inn?

(1) We build Him *stately material temples.*—We expend boundless treasure in their erection. Art joins hands with architecture, and the structure becomes a poem. Lily-work crowns the majestic pillar. Subdued light, and exquisite line, and tender colour add their riches to the finished pile. And the soul

[1] H. Bushnell, *Christ and His Salvation*, 2.

cries out, "Here is a house for Thee, O Man of Nazareth, Lord of glory! Here is the home I have built for Thee." And if the soul would only listen there comes back the pained response, "Where is the place of My rest? saith the Lord." "The Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands," "I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit." The Lord of glory seeks the warm inn of the soul, and we offer Him a manger of stone.

(2) Or, in place of the home which He seeks, we build Him a fane of *stately ritual*.—We spend infinite pains in designing dainty and picturesque ceremonials. We devise reverent and dignified movements. We invent an elaborate and impressive symbolism. We engage the ministry of noble music for the expression of our praise, and we swing the fragrant censer for the expression of our prayer. Or perhaps we discard the colour and the glow. We banish everything that is elaborate and ornate. We use no flowers, either in reality or in symbol. We reduce our ritualism to a simple posture. Our music is rendered without pride or ostentation. Everything is plain, prosaic and unadorned. We have a ritual without glitter, and we have movements without romance. But whether our ceremony be one or the other, the soul virtually says, "Here is a ritualistic house I have built for Thee, O Christ! Take up Thine abode in the dwelling which I have provided." And if the soul would only listen it would hear the Lord's reply, "My son, give me thine heart." He seeks the inn of the soul; we offer Him a ritualistic manger.

(3) Or again, we build Him the massive house of a *stately creed*.—The building is solid and comprehensive. All its parts are firm and well defined, and they are mortised with passionate zeal and devotion. We are proud of its constitution. The creed is all the more beautiful that it is now so venerable and hoary. The weather-stains of centuries only add to its significance and glory. There it stands, venerable, majestic, apparently indestructible, "Here is a credal home for Thee, O Lord! I am jealous for the honour of Thy house. I will contend earnestly for every stone in the holy fabric! Here is a home for Thee, O King." And if the soul would reverently and quietly listen this would be the response it would hear, "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" That is what the

Lord is seeking. He seeks not my credal statements but my personal faith. He solicits not my creed but my person, not my words but my heart. And so do we offer Him all these substitutes in the place of the dwelling He seeks. And if these are all we have to offer, "the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." We offer Him the hospitality of a big outer creed, but "there is no room in the inn."[1]

¶ Creed is the railway carriage; it won't take you on your journey unless you have the engine, which is active religion.[2]

¶ Some people seem to think that if they can pack the gospel away into a sound and orthodox creed it is perfectly safe. It is a sort of canned fruit of Christianity, hermetically sealed and correctly labelled which will keep for years without decay. An extravagant reliance has been placed, therefore, on confessions of faith as the preservatives of a pure gospel. But the heart is greater than the creed; and if the heart is wrong it will very soon corrupt the creed and interline it with its own heresies. Hence the wise injunction of the Apostle, "Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience."[3]

3. How may the world find room for Him?

(1) By finding room for His truth and the love of it. The world's attitude towards the birth of every great truth is focused in a single phrase in the simple story of the first Christmas, the greatest birthday since time began. Mary laid the infant Christ in a manger—"because there was no room for them in the inn." Right must ever fight its way against the world. Truth must ever walk alone in its Gethsemane. Justice must bravely face its Calvary if it would still live in triumph after all efforts to slay it. Love must ever, in the end, burst forth in its splendour from the dark clouds of hate and discord that seek to obscure it. These great truths must be born in the manger of poverty, or pain, or trial, or suffering, finding no room in the inn until at last by entering it in triumph they honour the inn that never honoured them in their hours of need, of struggle or of darkness. It requires sterling courage to live on the uplands of truth, battling bravely for the right, undismayed by coldness, undaunted by contempt, unmoved by criticism, serenely confident even in the

[1] J. H. Jowett. [2] *George Frederic Watts*, iii. 326.
[3] *A. J. Gordon: A Biography*, 289.

darkest hours, that right, justice and truth must win in the end.

¶ Every great truth in all the ages has had to battle for recognition. If it be real it is worth the struggle. Out of the struggle comes new strength for the victor. Trampled grass grows the greenest. Hardship and trial and restriction and opposition mean new vitality to character. In potting plants, it is well not to have the pot too large, for the more crowded the roots the more the plant will bloom. It is true, in a larger sense, of life. The world has ever misunderstood and battled against its thinkers, its leaders, its reformers, its heroes.[1]

¶ A happy man seems to be a solecism; it is a man's business to suffer, to battle, and to work.[2]

¶ Even the spectacle of man's repeated and pathetic failure to live up to his own ideal is "inspiring and consoling" to this onlooker, since, in spite of long ages of ill-success, the race is not discouraged, but continues to strive as if for assured victory, rendering obedience, however imperfect, to the inner voice that speaks of duty owed to ourselves, to our neighbour, to our God; and it is "inspiring and consoling" that traces of the same struggle can be discerned in the poor sentient beings, our inferiors. "Let it be enough for faith that the whole creation groans in mortal frailty, strives with unconquerable constancy: Surely not all in vain."[3]

(2) We find room for Him when we find room for His little ones.

¶ A few days ago there was performed in the hall of Lincoln's Inn, London, a mystery play called "Eager Heart." The story is briefly this. Eager Heart is a poor maiden living in a wayside cottage, who has heard that the king is going to pass that way, and that he will take up his quarters for a night somewhere in the neighbourhood. With all diligence she prepares the best room in her cottage for his reception, hoping that she may be the favoured one whom he will honour with a visit. Her two sisters, Eager Fame and Eager Sense, deride her expectations, and assure her that the king would never condescend to enter so humble an abode, and that he will, as a matter of course, seek hospitality with some of the great folk in that part of the country. She, however, has a strong premonition that her hopes are not ill-

[1] W. G. Jordan, *The Crown of Individuality*, 33.
[2] Carlyle, in *Life of Lord Houghton*, ii. 478.
[3] J. A. Hammerton, *Stevensoniana*, 215.

founded, and goes on with her preparations. When all is ready, a knock is heard at the door, and a poor woman with an infant at her breast begs the charity of a night's lodging. Eager Heart, sad and disappointed, yet feeling that she cannot refuse such a request, gives up to the distressed wayfarers the room which she had prepared for the king; and then goes forth into the night in the hopes of meeting him and at least expressing her goodwill to have entertained him had it been possible. On her way she meets a company of shepherds, who tell her they have seen a vision of angels, who have assured them that the king has already come, and is in the village. And as they return, they are joined by another pilgrim band, of eastern princes, who are making their way, guided by a heavenly light, to pay their homage to their sovereign lord. Needless to say, it is to the cottage of Eager Heart herself that they are guided. The infant is Himself the King, and the homeless woman is the Queen Mother.[1]

4. The world will find room for Him at last. Has it not found room for Him already? Has He not made room for Himself—He for whom the inn of Bethlehem had none? Through half the world men remember continually that coming. Amid the trivial associations of each Christmas, amid the kindlier thoughts which are native to the time, there is not wholly lost the sense of Him who in His greatness made these days solemn and sweet and grand, who made their kindlier thoughts become more natural. God, they remember, bowed Himself to become man for man's redemption. And He who dwelt among them in more than common lowliness now fills the thoughts and inspires the hopes of thousands who find through Him surer foothold for life, and through Him can face death.

¶ Little Hettie had a model village, and she never tired of setting it up.

"What kind of a town is that, Hettie?" asked her father.

"O, a Christian town," Hettie answered, quickly.

"Suppose we make it a heathen town," her father suggested. "What must we take out?"

"The church," said Hettie, taking it to one side.

"Is that all?"

"I suppose so."

"No, indeed," her father said. "The public school must go. Take the public library out also."

[1] H. Lucas, *At the Parting of the Ways*, 79.

"Anything else?" Hettie asked, sadly,

"Isn't that a hospital over there?"

"But, father, don't they have hospitals?"

"Not in heathen countries. It was Christ who taught us to care for the sick and the old."

"Then I must take out the Old Ladies' Home," said Hettie, very soberly.

"Yes, and that Orphans' Home at the other end of the town."

"Why, father," Hettie exclaimed, "then there's not one good thing left! I would not live in such a town for anything."

Does having room for Jesus make so much difference?[1]

III.

No Room in our Lives.

The difficulty with us to-day is just what it was when Christ trod this earth; and the real reason why He means so little to many of us is that there is no room for Him in our lives.

The only place in which He can make His home to-day is the inn of the soul, the secret rooms of the personal life. We sometimes sing, in one of the most tender and gracious of our hymns, "O make our hearts Thy dwelling-place," and that is just what the Lord is willing and waiting to do. "O make our hearts Thine inn!" But when He moves towards us He finds the inn already thronged.

¶ You may talk as you please about the things that have "put you off," as we say, and made you less keen about religion and its claims than you once were—the tendency of the Higher Criticism, or the results of the comparative study of religions, or the New Theology, or the Athanasian Creed, or the futility of our ordinary church-life, or the worldliness of professing Christians, or the divisions of Christendom. All these things have some importance; but you know perfectly well, and it has recently been set before us with extraordinary force and vigour, that if the Lord Jesus Christ were but to appear in the smoking-room one day when religious questions were being discussed so freely, all these things would dwindle into absolute insignificance, and the one vital question for you and for me would be whether we really loved Him enough to take up His cross and live out our lives manfully for His sake. Well, you may not interview Him in the

[1] A. P. Hodgson, *Thoughts for the King's Children*, 220.

smoking-room, but you can see Him just as clearly as ever you could if you will only give yourself a chance. He is as near as ever He was, as dear as ever He was, and the one question is whether we will give ourselves the chance of seeing Him.[1]

Yea, in the night, my soul, my daughter,
Cry,—clinging Heaven by the hems;
And lo! Christ walking on the water
Not of Gennesareth, but Thames.

1. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God?" This is the house our Redeemer seeks, the wonderful inn of the soul. Let us go and look inside that inn, for it has many rooms, housing many varied interests, and we may exclude the Lord from them all. Let us walk through a few of the rooms.

(1) There is first of all the room of the *mind*, the busy realm of the understanding. Try to imagine the multitude of thoughts that throng that room in a single day. From waking moment to the return of sleep they crowd its busy floors. There they are, thoughts innumerable, hurrying, jostling, coming, going! And yet in all the restless, tumultuous assembly, with the floor never empty, the Lord may have no place. "God is not in all his thoughts." There is no room in the inn.

¶ One forenoon a stranger entered a publishing establishment in a Russian city—I think in Moscow. He was dressed in very plain, homely garb. He quietly drew a manuscript out of his pocket, and requested that it be published. But the publisher, taking in his homely appearance with a quick glance of his shrewd, practised eye, answered him very curtly, refusing his request He said, "It's no use looking at your sketch. I really cannot be bothered. We have hundreds of such things in hand, and have really not time to deal with yours, even though you were in a position to guarantee the cost—which I very much doubt."

The stranger rolled up his manuscript, saying he must have been labouring under some misapprehension, as he had been told that the public liked to read what he wrote.

"The public like to read what you write?" repeated the publisher, eyeing the rugged figure before him. "Who are you? What is your name?" The stranger quietly said, "My name is Leo Tolstoi," as he buttoned his coat over the rejected manuscript. Instantly the astonished publisher was on the other side of the counter, with most humble apology, begging the privilege

[1] Bishop W. E. Collins, *Hours of Insight*, 117.

of publishing the manuscript. But the famous, eccentric genius quietly withdrew, with the coveted paper in his inner pocket.

There standeth One in your midst whom ye acknowledge not. And He does not tell us who He is, in the manner of the offended Russian Count. He tells us plainly that He is here, looking keenly, listening alertly, noting all. The Christ of the manger is in our midst. Even though not acknowledged perhaps, yet He is not unknown; He is not unrecognized. No one ever yet refused Christ admittance in ignorance of what he was doing, not really knowing whom he was crowding out. He may have failed to realize the seriousness of what he was doing, and the wonder of Him who was knocking; quite likely. But he knew that he was refusing entrance to Him who should be admitted. There is always a quiet, inner messenger making that unmistakably clear.[1]

(2) And here is another room, the room of *personal affection and desire.* It is the room where love lives and sings. And it is the room where love droops and sickens and dies. It is the room where impulse is born and where it grows or faints. It is the room where secret longing moves shyly about, and only occasionally shows itself at the window. It is the busy chamber of the emotions. And the Lord yearns to enter this carefully guarded room to make His home in the realm of waking and brooding affection. Is there any room for Him?

¶ That wondrous Christ is standing to-day at some heart-door pleading for entrance. Is it yours? You attend the church service, and give a tacit acknowledgment to the claims of Christianity, and prefer life in a land that owes its prosperity and safety to this pleading One. Yet He is standing outside of the door of your heart. Is he? He is, if He has not been let inside. The talented Holman Hunt, in his famous picture of Christ knocking at the door, reminds us that that door opens only from within. If you have not opened it, it is shut; and He without, knocking! strange![2]

Strangely the wondrous story doth begin
 Of that which came to pass on Christmas Day—
 "The new-born babe within a manger lay
Because there was no room inside the inn."
No room for Him who came to conquer sin
 And bid distress and mourning flee away!
 So in the stable He was fain to stay
Whilst revelry and riot reigned within.

[1] S. D. Gordon, *The Crowded Inn*, 25. [2] *Ibid.*, 27.

And still the same old tale is told again:
The world is full of greed and gain and glee,
And has no room for God because of them.
Lord, though my heart be filled with joy and pain,
Grant that it ne'er may find no room for Thee,
Like that benighted inn at Bethlehem![1]

(3) Let us pass into another room in the inn—the room of *the imagination.* It is the radiant chamber of ideals and fancies and visions and dreams. In this room we may find Prospect Window and the Window of Hope. It is here that we look out upon the morrow. And it is here that life's wishes and plans may be found. The Lord delights to abide in that bright chamber of purpose and dream. Is there any room?

¶ It is a popular impression of Bushnell that he was the subject of his imagination, and that it ran away with him in the treatment of themes which required only severe thought. The impression is a double mistake; theology does not call for severe thought alone, but for the imagination also and the seeing and interpreting eye that usually goes with it. It is not a vagrant and irresponsible faculty, but an inner eye, whose vision is to be trusted like that of the outer; it has in itself the quality of thought, and is not a mere picture-making gift. Bushnell trained his imagination to work on certain definite lines, and for a definite end; namely, to bring out the spiritual meaning hidden within the external form.[2]

(4) Not far from this room there is another—*the chamber of mirth.* It is here that the genius of merriment dwells, and here you may find the sunny presences of wit and humour. Here are quip and jest and jollity. Here is where bridal joy is found, and where the song of the vineyard is born. Will the Master turn into this room or will He avoid it? No; He even longs for a place in the happy crowd! Is there any room for Him in this hall of mirth, or is He crowded out?

¶ I remember that Charles Kingsley used to say, "I wonder if there is a family in all England where there is more laughter than there is in mine." And the Lord was an abiding guest at Charles Kingsley's table. Take Him into your conversation. He will come in like sunshine. There are some things that will just

[1] Ellen Thorneycroft Fowler, *Verses, Wise or Otherwise*, 196.
[2] T. T. Munger, *Horace Bushnell*, 383.

disappear at His coming as owls and bats vanish at the dawn. Our conversation will lose its meanness, and its suspicions, and its jealousies, and all uncharitableness. Our Christmas speech will itself be a home of light.[1]

2. Why is it that we keep Him out of our lives?

(1) We are too much occupied with our *ordinary affairs.* There are men upon whom work has grown by little and little, so slowly that they hardly realize how; perhaps it has not all been of their own seeking; certainly it has not all been the result of selfish ambition; sometimes it seems to be the result of a tendency which they could hardly resist. Anyhow, there can be no question as to the result of it all; little by little devotion, meditation and prayer seem not so much to have been given up as to have dried up of themselves out of the life. And the worst of it is that the occupations do not seem to have gained in the process. Like Pharaoh's lean kine, they have swallowed up everything else, but instead of being better, they are worse; the work is done more mechanically, and less freshly; more severely, but less wholeheartedly.

¶ One feels how natural it was that the small, weary company which crept in footsore by the north gate should have been ignored. They were quite humble people; they did not even belong to the village; they were among the last comers, for they have travelled from the distant north, and Mary in these days is not the swiftest of travellers. The village is crowded, for all have come to be enrolled. The interest is keen, for the matter involves questions of taxation, questions of national independence, questions of a world empire. It is not to be wondered at that none notices the group which creeps in when the sun is nigh setting, and, because the inn is full, finds what poor shelter it can. The world lost the honour of providing a place where its Redeemer might be born, because it was very busy over important things.[2]

¶ An inn—what an appropriate figure of the soul of man as it is by nature! What a multiplicity and what a prodigious variety of thoughts are always coming and going in the soul—the passengers these which throng the inn, and some of whom are so fugitive that they do not even take up their abode there for the night! And what distraction, discomposure, and noise do these outgoing and incoming thoughts produce, so that perhaps scarcely ever in the day is our mind collected and calm, except just for the

[1] J. H. Jowett. [2] A. C. Welch.

few moments spent in private prayer before we lie down and when we rise—the hurry and confusion this, produced by the constant arrivals at, and departures from, an inn.[1]

(2) Our life is sometimes already filled with the thronging multitude of our *cares*. We can be so full of care as to be quite careless about Him. We can have so much to worry about that we have no time to think about Christ. "The cares of this world choke the word," and the Speaker of the word is forgotten. Yes, we may entertain so many cares that the Lord cannot get in at the door. And yet all the time the gracious promise is waiting: Cast all your care on Him, for He careth for you.

And what, then, is the cure for worry? Can you ask? If you will but make room for Him in your heart and keep Him there, your worry will vanish, even as in the *Pilgrim's Progress* Christian's load fell off when he lifted his eyes to the Cross of Christ. With Him there to share every thought, you will find that many of the difficulties will smooth themselves out forthwith; and as you learn to leave in His hands the things which are His business, not yours, so will all worry become by His grace a thing of the past.

¶ Doubtless your cross was chosen for you by our Lord and Master just for its weight. To me there is always a wonderful beauty and consolation in the fact, so simply told in the narrative of the Passion, that His cross proved too heavy for Him. He has never since that hour suffered any one of His own to bear a cross unaided, nor yet too heavy.[2]

(3) Our *pleasures* keep Christ out of our lives. A merely sensational life can make us numb to all that is spiritual; and the unseen world becomes non-existent to our souls. That is an awful law of life. We may so dwell in the pleasures of the senses that all the deeper things are as though they were dead, and buried in forgotten graves.

One would certainly think that the Lord of glory could not be crowded out of a wedding, that solemn and sacred experience in human life. But He can! Of course we may mention His name, but the naming is too often only a conventional courtesy,

[1] E. M. Goulburn, *The Pursuit of Holiness*, 281.
[2] Archbishop Magee, in *Life* by J. C. Macdonnell, i. 268.

North Dakota State Library

while the Lord Himself is relegated to the yard. We may be engrossed with the sensations of the event, with the glittering externals, with the dresses and the orange-blossoms, while the holy Christ, upon whom the lasting joy and peace and blessedness of the wedded pair will utterly depend, is absolutely forgotten.

(4) And again, there are those who have no room for Him because of their *sin:* and this is the most real and all-pervading obstacle of all. A sinful habit, using the word in its largest sense, of pride or envy, covetousness or gluttony, and not only of particular sinful acts, is by far the worst obstacle to keep the Saviour out, and that because it at once deadens and deceives us. Far be it from me, for instance, to deny that doubts are sometimes purely intellectual; but I say deliberately that I have rarely talked with a man, or a woman either, about religious doubts without finding, when they come to speak quite freely, that the difficulty was, in part at any rate, a moral one. When I look into my own heart, I see the same thing; my own doubts have been based on moral difficulties far more largely than I was willing to admit to myself at the time, or even than I knew at the time; and I believe that most of us would have to make the same confession.[1]

¶ Christ's crowding-out power is tremendous. That explains why He is so crowded out. When allowed freely in He crowds everything out that would crowd Him out. He crowds out *sin.* By the blood drawn from His own side He washes it out. By the soft-burning but intense fire of His heart He burns it out. By the purity of His own wondrous presence, recognized as Lord, He reveals its horrid ugliness, and compels us, by the holy compulsion of love, to keep it out.[2]

There fared a mother driven forth
Out of an inn to roam;
In the place where she was homeless
All men are at home.
The crazy stable close at hand,
With shaking timber and shifting sand,
Grew a stronger thing to abide and stand
Than the square stones of Rome.

[1] W. E. Collins, *Hours of Insight*, 121.
[2] S. D. Gordon, *The Crowded Inn*, 58.

For men are homesick in their homes,
And strangers under the sun,
And they lay their heads in a foreign land
Whenever the day is done.
Here we have battle and blazing eyes,
And chance and honour and high surprise,
But our homes are under miraculous skies
Where the Yule tale was begun.

A Child in a foul stable,
Where the beasts feed and foam,
Only where He was homeless
Are you and I at home:
We have hands that fashion and heads that know,
But our hearts we lost—how long ago!
In a place no chart nor ship can show
Under the sky's dome.

This world is wild as an old wives' tale,
And strange the plain things are,
The earth is enough and the air is enough
For our wonder and our war;
But our rest is as far as the fire-drake swings
And our peace is put in impossible things
Where clashed and thundered unthinkable wings
Round an incredible star.

To an open house in the evening
Home shall all men come,
To an older place than the Eden
And a taller town than Rome.
To the end of the way of the wandering star,
To the things that cannot be and that are,
To the place where God was homeless
And all men are at home.[1]

[1] G. K. Chesterton, *The House of Christmas.*

Good Tidings of Great Joy.

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Good Tidings of Great Joy.

And the angel said unto them, Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people: for there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.—Luke ii. 10, 11.

1. To the evangelist and to Christian faith the coming of Jesus into the world is the great event in its history. We divide time into the Christian era and the era before Christ. Yet we cannot be sure of the very year when Christ was born, any more than of the very year when He died; and though St. Luke was anxious to date the birth precisely, as we see from verses 1 and 2, there are unsolved difficulties connected with the census which we have simply to acknowledge. That the Day-spring from on high visited the world to give light to them that sit in darkness is undoubted, though we may not be able to tell the hour of its rising.

The narrative of St. Luke is the most wonderful and beautiful in Holy Scripture, and has always touched the hearts of men. Not that Christmas, as we call it, was from the beginning the great festival of believers. On the contrary, the great festival of the early Church was Easter, the day of the resurrection. It was not till the thirteenth century that the infant Christ and the manger came to have the place they now hold in the thoughts and affections of Christians, and this was greatly due to the influence of Francis of Assisi, who visited Bethlehem and wept with holy joy over the lowly birth of the Saviour. He diffused his own devotion when he returned to Italy, and great artists found in the stable and the manger, the ox and the ass (borrowed from Isa. i. 3), the mother and the Child, the shepherds and the angels, the highest inspirations of their genius.

2. It is long since the shepherds near Bethlehem beheld in the clear eastern sky the glory of the Lord, and heard the voice of the heavenly messenger proclaiming, "Behold, I bring you good

tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people: for there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." Centuries have rolled by, but the lustre of that night has not passed away. The tones of that message have been caught and repeated by an increasing number of God-sent messengers. They swell in volume and majesty and power until now from all parts of the world the grand chorus resounds, filling the air with its message of joy and hope and faith and love, "Joy to the world, the Lord has come!"

I.

The Circumstances.

1. The Shepherds.

There were many great men and many wealthy men in Palestine. There were scholars of the most profound and various learning. There were lean ascetics who had left the joys of home, and gone away to pray and fast in deserts. But it was not to any of these that the angels came, and it was not in their ears that the music sounded; the greatest news that the world ever heard was given to a group of humble shepherds. Few sounds from the mighty world ever disturbed them. They were not vexed by any ambition to be famous. They passed their days amid the silence of nature; and to the Jew nature was the veil of God. They were men of a devout and reverent spirit, touched with a sense of the mystery of things, as shepherds are so often to this day. Is it not to such simple and reverent spirits that God still reveals Himself in amplest measure? How fitting it was, too, that shepherds should be chosen, when we remember how the Twenty-third Psalm begins, and when we reflect that the Babe born in Bethlehem was to be the Good Shepherd giving His life for the sheep.

¶ The Lord manifested to the sage, the sovereign, is now manifest to the shepherd. This last was peculiarly significant of the genius of Christianity. The people need Christ. They have their share of sin, suffering, sorrow. They deeply need the grace, consolations, and strengthening of the Gospel. The people are capable of Christ. Without the intellectual distinction of the Magi, or the social eminence of Herod, they have the essential

greatness of soul which renders them capable of Christ and of His greatest gifts. The people rejoice in Christ. "The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen." From that day to this a new glory has shone on all common scenes, a new joy has filled the common heart that has been opened to the Prince of Peace, the Saviour of the World.[1]

2. The Place.

It is generally supposed that these anonymous shepherds were residents of Bethlehem; and tradition has fixed the exact spot where they were favoured with this Advent Apocalypse—about a thousand paces from the modern village. It is a historic fact that there was a tower near that site, called Eder, or "the Tower of the Flock," around which were pastured the flocks destined for the Temple sacrifice; but the topography of verse 8 is purposely vague. The expression, "in that same country," would describe any circle within the radius of a few miles from Bethlehem as its centre, and the very vagueness of the expression seems to push back the scene of the Advent music to a farther distance than a thousand paces. And this view is confirmed by the language of the shepherds themselves, who, when the vision has faded, say one to another, "Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing that is come to pass"; for they scarcely would have needed, or used, the adverbial "even" were they keeping their flocks so close up to the walls of the city. We may therefore infer, with some amount of probability, that, whether the shepherds were residents of Bethlehem or not, when they kept watch over their flocks, it was not on the traditional site, but farther away over the hills.

¶ It is difficult, and very often impossible, for us to fix the precise locality of these sacred scenes, these bright points of intersection, where Heaven's glories flash out against the dull carbon-points of earth; and the voices of tradition are at best but doubtful guesses. It would almost seem as if God Himself had wiped out these memories, hiding them away, as He hid the sepulchre of Moses, lest the world should pay them too great a homage, and lest we might think that one place lay nearer to Heaven than another, when all places are equally distant, or rather equally near. It is enough to know that somewhere on

[1] W. L. Watkinson, *The Gates of Dawn*, 357.

these lonely hills came the vision of the angels, perhaps on the very spot where David was minding his sheep when Heaven summoned him to a higher task, passing him up among the kings.[1]

3. **The Time.**

The time is significant. Night is the parent of holy thought, —the nurse of devout aspiration. Its darkness is often the chosen time for heavenly illumination. When earth is dark, heaven glows. The world was shrouded in night when Christ came, and into the thickest of its "gross darkness" His light burst. Yet the unobtrusiveness of His appearance, and the blending of secrecy with the manifestation of His power, are well typified by that glory which shone in the night, and was seen only by two or three poor men. The Highest came to His own in quietness, and almost stole into the world, and the whole life was of a piece with the birth and its announcement. There was the "hiding of His power."

Christmas hath a darkness
 Brighter than the blazing noon,
Christmas hath a chillness
 Warmer than the heat of June,
Christmas hath a beauty
 Lovelier than the world can show:
For Christmas bringeth Jesus,
 Brought for us so low.

Earth, strike up your music,
 Birds that sing and bells that ring;
Heaven hath answering music
 For all Angels soon to sing:
Earth, put on your whitest
 Bridal robe of spotless snow:
For Christmas bringeth Jesus,
 Brought for us so low.[2]

4. How simply the appearance of the single angel and the glory of the Lord is told! The evangelist thinks it the most natural thing in the world that heaven should send out its inhabitant on such an errand, and that the symbol of the Divine

[1] Henry Burton. [2] Christina G. Rossetti, *Verses*, 54.

presence should fill the night with sudden splendour, which paled the bright Syrian stars. So it was, if that birth were what he tells us it was—the coming into human life of the manifest Deity. If we think of what he is telling, his quiet tone is profoundly impressive. The Incarnation is the great central miracle, the object of devout wonder to "principalities . . . in heavenly places." And not only do angels come to herald and to adore, but "the glory of the Lord," that visible brightness which was the token of God's presence between the cherubim and had been hid in the secret of the sanctuary while it shone, but which had for centuries been absent from the Temple, now blazes with undestructive light on the open hillside, and encircles them and the friendly angel by their side. What did that mean but that the birth of Jesus was the highest revelation of God, henceforth not to be shut within the sanctuary, but to be the companion of common lives, and to make all sacred by its presence? The glory of God shines where Christ is, and where it shines is the temple.

> And now the day draws nigh when Christ was born;
> The day that showed how like to God Himself
> Man had been made, since God could be revealed
> By one that was a man with men, and still
> Was one with God the Father; that men might
> By drawing nigh to Him draw nigh to God,
> Who had come near to them in tenderness.[1]

II.

The Preface to the Message.

1. Reassurance.

"Be not afraid." This was the first bidding sent from heaven to men when Jesus Christ was born. It was no new message of reassurance; again and again in a like need a like encouragement had been vouchsafed: to Abraham, to Isaac, to Gideon, to Daniel, to Zacharias, the same tranquillizing, helpful words had come from the considerateness and gentleness that are on high. But to the shepherds of Bethlehem they came with a new power and

[1] G. MacDonald, "Within and Without" (*Poetical Works*, i. 52).

significance. For now they had their final warrant upon earth; those attributes of God, those truths of the Divine Nature upon which the bidding rested, had their perfect expression now in a plain fact of human history. The birth of Jesus Christ was the answer, the solvent for such fears as rushed upon the shepherds when "the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them." They feared, as the mystery and stillness of the night were broken by that strange invasion, what might follow it. "And the angel said unto them, Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy." Within that glory was the love of God; and all that it might disclose must come from Him who so loved the world that He had sent His Son to be born, to suffer, and to die for men. There must, indeed, be awe in coming near to God, in realizing how near He comes to us: but it is like the awe with which even earthly goodness, greatness, wisdom at their highest touch us; it is not like our terror of that which is arbitrary and unaccountable. God dwells in depths of burning light, such as the eyes of sinful men can never bear: but the light itself, with all it holds, streams forth from love, and is instinct, informed, aglow with love.

¶ These words which the angel spoke were but anticipations of the words with which Jesus Himself has made us familiar. They were His favourite words. He might have borrowed them from the angel, or more likely given them to the angel in advance. We hear from His own lips continually—"Fear not." He meets us at every turn of life with that cheery invocation. He passed through His ministry day by day repeating it. It was the watchword of His journey and warfare. The disciples heard it every time they were troubled, cast down, and afraid. When they fell at His feet trembling, He lifted them up with the words "Fear not!" When their ship was sinking in the storm, they heard the cry "Fear not!" When they shivered at the thought of all the foes and dangers which awaited them, there came reassurance with the voice, "Fear not, little flock." When He was leaving them, one of His last words was: "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

Christ has been speaking that word ever since. He came to speak it. He came to deliver man from those fears. He smiles upon our fears to-day. He almost laughs them away in the sunshine of His power and confidence. The Incarnation is God's answer to human gloom, despondency, and pessimism. What are

you afraid of? it says. Am I not with you always to the end? And all power is given unto Me in heaven and on earth. You are afraid of your sins? Fear not! I am able to save to the uttermost. You are afraid of the world, the flesh, and the devil? Fear not! I have overcome the world, and cast out the prince of the world. You are afraid of your own weakness? Fear not! All things are possible to him that believeth. You are afraid of life's changes and uncertainties? Fear not! The Father hath given all things into My hands. You are afraid of death and bereavement? Fear not! I have conquered and abolished death. You are afraid of all the ominous signs of the times, the perils of religion and the shakings of the Church? Fear not! I am the first, the last, the Almighty, and the rock against which the gates of hell shall not prevail.[1]

¶ Thought could not go on much longer with its over-emphasis of the Atonement and its under-emphasis of the Incarnation without losing its relation to human society. The Atonement, as something done for and upon man, leaving him not an actor but a receiver, threw him out of gear with the modern idea of personality. This idea was rather to be found in the Incarnation, the inmost meaning of which is Divine Fatherhood and obedient Sonship. It means Christ, not dying for man to fill out some demand of government, but living in man in order to develop his Divineness, or, as Bushnell phrased it, that he might become "Christed." It was getting to be seen that whatever Christianity is to do for man must be done through the Incarnation; that is, through the oneness of God and humanity, the perfect realization of which is to be found in the Christ.[2]

2. **Universal joy.**

The angel's message matches with the Jewish minds he addresses. The great joy he proclaims is to be, not for all people, but for all the people—that is, Israel; the Saviour who has been born in David's city is the Messianic King for whom Israel was waiting. This was not all the truth, but it was as much as the shepherds could take in.

¶ The Jews said, There is a Gospel—to the Jews. And when the Gospel went out beyond the Jews the Roman Catholic Church said, There is a Gospel—to the baptized. And they collected them together by the thousand in India, and sprinkled water on them, so as to give them a chance to be saved. Calvin,

[1] J. G. Greenhough, *Christian Festivals and Anniversaries*, 207.
[2] T. T. Munger, *Horace Bushnell*, 399.

who has been condemned for his doctrine of election, by it broadened out the Church idea of salvation. When men said, Only Jews can be saved, when men said, Only the baptized can be saved, Calvin said, Anyone can be saved. It is for those who have been baptized, and for those who have not been baptized; it is for those who are Jews, and for those who are Gentiles; it is for those who are old enough to accept the Gospel, and it is for the little children not old enough to accept the Gospel. God can save anyone He will. That is the doctrine of election. And now we are growing to a broader view than this. It is not for the Jew only, but for the Gentile; not for the baptized only, but also for the unbaptized; not for the elect only, but for the non-elect, if there could be any non-elect; not only for those who have heard it, but for those who have not heard it. This is the message of glad tidings and joy which shall be for all people. It is salvation for "*all people.*"[1]

¶ How could I tell my joy to my brother if it were not a universal joy? I can tell my grief to the glad, but not my gladness to the grieving. I dare not spread my banquet at the open window, where the hungry are passing by. Therefore, oh! my Father, I rejoice that Thou hast sent into my heart a ray of glory which is not alone for me. I rejoice that Thou hast given me a treasure which I need not hide from my brother. I rejoice that the light which sparkles in my pool is not from the candle, but from the moon. The candle is for me, but the moon is for all. Put out my candle, oh! my Father. Extinguish the joy that is proud of being unshared. Lower the lamp which shines only on my own mirror. Let down the lights that make a wall between myself and the weary. And over the darkness let there rise the star—Bethlehem's star, humanity's star, the star that shines for one because it shines for all.[2]

III.

The Message.

1. "There is born . . . a Saviour." A Saviour! What a thrill of joy must have shot through the hearts of these astonished men as they listened to the word of wondrous import. A Saviour! Then indeed man is to be saved! Through the long, dark, weary ages man had been groaning in miserable captivity to the tyrant

[1] L. Abbott, in *Christian Age*, xli. (1892) 84.
[2] G. Matheson, *Searchings in the Silence*, 52.

powers of sin, and nothing was more evident than this, that he had lost all power of saving himself. Now, at last, another is going to undertake his helpless cause. He who of old heard the cry of the Israelites in Egypt under the taskmaster's whip, and saw the anguish of their heart while they toiled under the cruel bondage of Pharaoh—He who sent them a saviour in the person of Moses, and who subsequently again and again delivered them from their enemies by raising up a Saviour for them, He had at length undertaken the cause of ruined humanity, and was about to deliver a sin-bound world. A Saviour, and the champion of our race, was actually born and in their midst, ready soon to enter on His mysterious conflict, and to work out a complete deliverance, a full salvation. This was indeed glad tidings of great joy. This was the dawning of a new epoch. The Day-spring from on high was surely visiting a darkened, sin-shadowed world.

¶ The birth of any man child is an interesting event—another added to the many million lives, to the multitude which none can number, who are to stand before the judgment-seat of God; another life from the birth-source, which shall flow on through the channel of mortal life, the gulf of death, and the underground channel of the grave, to the boundless ocean of eternity:—for, once born, one must hold on to think, and live, and feel for ever. Such is the birth of every one who has his time to be born behind him, and his time to die before him still. But how intensely interesting the birth of that child whose name is called "Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace," but for whose birth we all must have died eternally, and but for whose birth, it would have been better none of us had been born.[1]

¶ Christ goes out into the world. He heals the sick, He feeds the hungry, He comforts the afflicted. But in all the healing and helping this one message He repeats, in different forms, over and over again: "Thy sins be forgiven thee." They let down a paralytic through the roof of a house before Him, and this is His message: "Thy sins be forgiven thee." A woman kneels before Him and washes His feet with her tears and wipes them with the hairs of her head, and this is His message: "Go in peace, and sin no more." They nail Him to the cross, and His prayer breathes the same message: "Father, forgive them." There hangs by the side of Him a brigand who has gone through sins of murder and robbery.

[1] *Life of Robertson of Irvine* (by A. Guthrie), 256.

He looks upon him with compassion, and says: "This day thou shalt be with me in paradise." He is indeed the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. This is more than healing the sick, more than feeding the hungry, more than clothing the naked, more than educating the ignorant; this is taking off the great burden under which humanity has been crushed.[1]

2. "There is born . . . Christ." He was born the Messiah, the Anointed One of Israel. To Israel He came fulfilling all the ancient covenant promises, and bringing with Him the "tender mercies of our God." He is that Seed of the woman announced and promised to Adam and Eve in the garden, whose mission it was to bruise the serpent's head. He was and is that Seed of Abraham "in whom all the nations of the earth are blessed"; of whom Balaam prophesied and said, "I shall see him, but not now; I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel." He was and is the One whose day Abraham saw afar off and was glad. He was and is that Wonderful Counsellor of whom Isaiah prophesied, the root out of a dry ground, whose "visage was so marred more than any man"; who was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities, on whom the Lord caused all our iniquities to meet; the "prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren" whom Moses foresaw and whom he bade all Israel hear; the Stem of Jesse; the Branch of Zechariah; the Messenger of the Covenant and the Sun of Righteousness, arising with healing in His wings, whom Malachi foretold as being nigh. He is the sum and substance of all the ceremonial sacrifices and feasts of the Jews; in a word, He is that One of whom Moses in the Law and all the prophets did speak and all the Psalmists sang.

He might have come in regal pomp,
With pealing of Archangel trump—
An angel blast as loud and dread
As that which shall awake the dead . . .
He came not thus; no earthquake shock
Shiver'd the everlasting rock;
No trumpet blast nor thunder peal
Made earth through all her regions reel;

[1] Lyman Abbott.

And but for the mysterious voicing
Of that unearthly choir rejoicing;
And but for that strange herald gem,
The star which burned o'er Bethlehem,
The shepherds, on His natal morn,
Had known not that the God was born.
There were no terrors, for the song
Of peace rose from the seraph throng;
On wings of love He came—to save,
To pluck pale terror from the grave,
And on the blood-stain'd Calvary
He won for man the victory.[1]

3. "There is born . . . the Lord."

(1) *In the Child born at Bethlehem we find God.*—How steadily do the angel's words climb upwards, as it were, from the cradle to the throne. He begins with the lowly birth, and then rises, step by step, each word opening a wider and more wonderful prospect, to that climax beyond which there is nothing—that this infant is "the Lord." The full joy and tremendous wonder of the first word are not felt till we read the last. The birth is the birth of "the Lord." We cannot give any but the highest meaning to that sacred name, which could have but one meaning to a Jew. It was much that there was born a Saviour—much that there was born a Messiah. Men need a deliverer, and the proclamation here is best kept in its widest meaning—as of one who sets free from all ills outward and inward, and brings all outward and inward good. The Saviour of men must be a man, and therefore it is good news that He is born. It was much that Messiah should be born. The fulfilment of the wistful hopes of many generations, the accomplishment of prophecy, the Divine communication of the Spirit which fitted kings and priests of old for their work, the succession to David's throne, were all declared in that one announcement that the Christ was born in David's city. But that last word, "the Lord," crowns the wonder and the blessing, while it lays the only possible foundation for the other two names.

If, on the one hand, man's Saviour must be man, on the other, He must be more than man; and nothing short of a Divine man can heal the wounds of mankind, or open a fountain of blessing

[1] N. T. Carrington.

sufficient for their needs. Unless God become man, there can be no Saviour; nor can there be any Christ. For no mere humanity can bear the full gift of the Divine Spirit, which is Messiah's anointing for His office, nor discharge that office in all its depth and breadth. Many in this day try to repeat the angel's message, and leave out the last word, and then they wonder that it stirs little gladness and works no salvation. Let us be sure that, unless the birth at Bethlehem was the Incarnation of Deity, it would have called forth no angel songs, nor will it work any deliverance or bring any joy to men.

¶ A God in the sky will never satisfy men and women upon earth. God on the mountain will never suffice man on the plain. True, it is much, very much, to know that God is in heaven, "The high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity," above earth's petty discords and changing views and selfish passions. But this falls short, pitiably short, of man's demands. It is, at best, an icy creed, and not, by itself, the warm, loving creed of the Christian. For it leaves a gulf between God and man, with no bridge to pass over. It is the difference between Olympus and Olivet. What—so the heart will ask—is the good of a God "above the bright blue sky," when I am down here upon earth? What intimacy can there be between "the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity" and an earth-born being such as I am? How could the missionaries persuade men that such a God loved them, cared for them, felt with them? How, indeed, could God Himself so persuade men, save by coming and living among them, sharing their lives, experiencing their temptations, drinking the "vinegar and gall" which they drank, suffering in the flesh as they suffered? There was no other way. Hence the Incarnation. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us."

It is related of a celebrated musician that, when asked to compose a National Anthem for the people of another country, he went and lived with them, studied them from within, shared their poverty, became one with them that he might become one of them, and was thus, and only thus, enabled to express their feelings in his music. This is what God did at the Incarnation.[1]

¶ When the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, the finite met the Infinite—the temporal, the Eternal. Heaven and earth coalesced, not in semblance, but in reality; not by proxy, but in the wonderful Person that combined the highest characteristics of both. In Him all fulness—the fulness of the Creator

[1] E. E. Holmes, *The Days of the Week*, 42.

and the fulness of the creature—dwelt bodily. All things were gathered together in one in Him—both those which are in the heavens and those which are in the earth—even in Him. His Incarnation was the crowning miracle of grace, as the creation of man was the crowning miracle of nature.[1]

¶ "If Moslems," Lull argued, "according to their law affirm that God loved man because He created him, endowed him with noble faculties, and pours His benefits upon him, then the Christians according to their law affirm the same. But inasmuch as the Christians believe more than this, and affirm that God so loved man that He was willing to become man, to endure poverty, ignominy, torture, and death for his sake, which the Jews and Saracens do not teach concerning Him, therefore is the religion of the Christians, which thus reveals a Love beyond all other love, superior to that of those which reveals it only in an inferior degree." Islam is a loveless religion. Raymund Lull believed and proved that Love could conquer it. The Koran denies the Incarnation, and so remains ignorant of the true character not only of the Godhead but of God.[2]

¶ We make far too little of the Incarnation; the Fathers knew much more of the incarnate God. Some of them were oftener at Bethlehem than at Calvary; they had too little of Calvary, but they knew Bethlehem well. They took up the Holy Babe in their arms; they loved Immanuel, God with us. We are not too often at the cross; but we are too seldom at the cradle; and we know too little of the Word made flesh, of the Holy Child Jesus. [3]

(2) *Though Divine yet is He human.*—Behold what manner of love God hath bestowed upon us that He should espouse our nature! For God had never so united Himself with any creature before. His tender mercy had ever been over all His works; but they were still so distinct from Himself that a great gulf was fixed between the Creator and the created, so far as existence and relationship are concerned. The Lord had made many noble intelligences, principalities, and powers of whom we know little; we do not even know what those four living creatures may be who are nearest the Eternal Presence; but God had never taken up the nature of any of them, nor allied Himself with them by

[1] H. Macmillan, *The Garden and the City*, 32.
[2] S. M. Zwemer, *Raymund Lull*, 140.
[3] "Rabbi" Duncan, in *Recollections* by A. Moody Stuart, 167.

any actual union with His Person. He has, however, allied Himself with man: He has come into union with man, and therefore He loves him unutterably well and has great thoughts of good towards him.

The fact that such intimate union of the Divine with the human is possible unveils the essential Godlikeness of man. His nature is capable of receiving Divine indwelling. There is such affinity between God and him that the fulness of the Godhead can dwell bodily in a man. Christianity has often been accused of gloomy, depressing views of human nature; but where, in all the dreams of superficial exalters of manhood, is there anything so radiant with hope as the solid fact that the eternal Son of God has said of it, "Here will I dwell, for I have desired it"? Christianity has no temptation to varnish over the dark realities of man as he is, for it knows its power to make him what he was meant to be.

So we have to look on the child Christ as born "to give the world assurance of a man," or, in modern phraseology, to realize the ideal of human nature. That birth in the manger was the first appearance of the shoot from the dry stump of the Davidic house, which was to flower into "a plant of renown," and fill the world with its beauty and fragrance. One thinks of the "loveliness of perfect deeds," the continual submission to the loved will of the Father, the tranquillity unbroken, the uninterrupted self-suppression, the gentle immobility of resolve, the gracious words, bright with heavenly wisdom, warm with pure love, throbbing with quick pity, as one gazes on the "young child," and would, with the strangers from the East, bring homage and offerings thither. There is the dawn of a sun without a spot; the head-waters of a mighty stream without stain or perturbation in all its course.

¶ The story tells us that Christ Himself was as poor and as unfamed as the shepherds—yet all Heaven was with Him. No trumpet-flourish told His coming, no posts rode swift from town to town to announce His Kingship. Earth and its glory took no notice of One who was laid in a manger. But far above in the world beyond, where earthly glory hath no praise, and earth no power, and rank no dignity, the Child who lived to love and die for men, was celebrated among the heavenly host. All the courts

of Heaven began to praise God for the little Child for whom there was no shelter on earth but a cave in the rocks. Christianity has restored humanity to man.[1]

"What means that star," the Shepherds said,
"That brightens through the rocky glen?"
And angels, answering overhead,
Sang, "Peace on earth, good-will to men!"

'Tis eighteen hundred years and more
Since those sweet oracles were dumb;
We wait for Him, like them of yore;
Alas, He seems so slow to come!

But it was said, in words of gold
No time or sorrow e'er shall dim,
That little children might be bold
In perfect trust to come to Him.

All round about our feet shall shine
A light like that the wise men saw,
If we our loving wills incline
To that sweet Life which is the Law.

So shall we learn to understand
The simple faith of shepherds then,
And, clasping kindly hand in hand,
Sing, "Peace on earth, good-will to men!"

And they who do their souls no wrong,
But keep at eve the faith of morn,
Shall daily hear the angel-song,
"To-day the Prince of Peace is born!"[2]

[1] Stopford A. Brooke, *Sunshine and Shadow*, 191.
[2] J. R. Lowell, *A Christmas Carol.*

The Song of the Heavenly Host.

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The Song of the Heavenly Host.

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

Glory to God in the highest,
And on earth peace among men in whom he is well pleased.—
Luke ii. 13, 14.

1. In all the Christian year, in all the secular year, there is not a day that has gained the same heartiness of universal welcome as the kindly Christmas. Though Easter-day is chief in the Church's Calendar, and though it comes in the hopeful spring with the first green leaves, when the most care-worn know some fitful waking-up of the old light-heartedness, it has never taken such hold of the common mind of our race as has the Sacred Festival that comes in the deadest days of the drear December, when in the wild winter-time "the heaven-born Child lay meanly-wrapt in the rude manger"; when those linked by blood, and early remembrances of the same fireside, but parted the long year through by the estranging necessities of life, strive to meet again, as in childhood, together; and all the innocent mirth, the revived associations, the kindly affection, are hallowed by the environing presence of the Birth-day of the Blessed Redeemer.

Like small curled feathers, white and soft,
The little clouds went by
Across the moon, and past the stars,
And down the western sky:
In upland pastures, where the grass
With frosted dew was white,
Like snowy clouds the young sheep lay
That first best Christmas night.

With finger on her solemn lip,
Night hushed the shadowy earth,
And only stars and angels saw
The little Saviour's birth;

Then came such flash of silver light
 Across the bending skies,
The wondering shepherds woke and hid
 Their frightened, dazzled eyes!

And all their gentle sleepy flock
 Looked up, then slept again,
Nor knew the light that dimmed the stars
 Brought endless peace to men,—
Nor even heard the gracious words
 That down the ages ring—
"The Christ is born! The Lord has come,
 Goodwill on earth to bring!"

Then o'er the misty moonlit fields,
 Dumb with the world's great joy,
The shepherds sought the white-walled town
 Where lay the baby boy—
And oh, the gladness of the world,
 The glory of the skies,
Because the longed-for Christ looked up
 In Mary's happy eyes![1]

¶ In an Oxford College Chapel is a famous Nativity window. From the Infant, lying in the midst, light is made to stream on all around. So, through the Christmas chapter, ending with our text, light streams from the manger on the Christmas feast; tingeing alike its festivity and fun, its tender memories and associations, making it the Child's Festival of all the year. Children understand it best, with a fulness of feeling and an implicitness of faith they lose in after years; but still to us older ones each Christmas freshens and recaptures something of our childish feelings—in hymn and carol, in family and neighbour greetings, in fireside merriment and kindliness, we feel again the tender softening emotion which was our childish tribute to the day. With shepherds, angels, kings, we once more go even unto Bethlehem, content if only, after failures and shortcomings past, chances missed, friends lost, aims unperformed, we may win and make our own the Christmas prize which the angels glorified and the Infant taught, anchoring our souls at last upon the steadfast dominating Peace which waits on gentle will.

[1] Margaret Deland.

The sacred chorus first was made
 Upon the first of Christmas days.
The shepherds heard it overhead,
 The joyful angels raised it then:
Glory to heaven on high it said,
 And peace on earth to gentle men.

My song, save this, is little worth,
 I lay my simple note aside,
And wish you health and love and mirth,
 As fits the solemn Christmas tide,
As fits the holy Christmas birth;
 Be this, good friends, our carol still,
Be peace on earth, be peace on earth,
 To men of gentle will.[1]

2. In its liturgical use the "Gloria in Excelsis" contributed a precious element to the devotions of the Church, as was natural from its heavenly origin and its tone of glory and gladness. It was known as the "Angelic Hymn" (the "Sanctus" being in later time distinguished as the "Seraphic Hymn"). The name in course of time signified not only the words of the angels as used alone, but also the full form of praise and prayer and creed, of which those words became the opening and the groundwork. There are traces of this noble hymn as used in the Church from the most ancient times; and the Alexandrine Codex (close of fifth century) gives it at length at the end of the thirteenth Canticle of the Greek Church, entitling it a "Morning Hymn." Early Latin translations with differences are found in various quarters, and it seems clear that when the well-known Latin form of the hymn was inserted in the Latin Psalters it was used in the daily or weekly hour services of the clergy.

The introduction of the hymn into the Eucharistic Office of the Western Church has been traditionally assigned to different popes, but it was certainly a part of that Office in the fifth and sixth centuries, and directions are given in the Sacramentaries as to occasions for its use. At times and in places it exhibited doctrinal variations, as in the form given in the Apostolical Constitutions, where it has received a shape possible for Arian use. On account probably of doctrinal diversities the fourth

[1] W. Tuckwell, *Nuggets from the Bible Mine*, 144.

Council of Toledo, A.D. 633, directed that in churches only the primitive angelic words should be sung, without the additions composed, as they said, "by the doctors of the Church." But this was a local and temporary restriction. The hymn, or "greater doxology," as it was sometimes called, had its place at the opening of the service as it now has with us at the close. There is a fitness in either position.[1]

3. This is not the earliest angelic hymn that is recorded or alluded to in Scripture. At the first creation, too, "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." Whatever doubt there may be in respect of those "sons of God" mentioned in Genesis whose apostasy from Him did so much to hasten the flood, there can be no doubt or difficulty in regard of these. The "sons of God" here can be only the angels of heaven, the heavenly host; for there as yet existed no other who could claim, or be competitors with them for, this name. So was it at the first creation; and it might almost seem on this night of the Nativity as if a new creation had taken place, for now again we hear of "a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men." Nor, if we thus judged, should we prove very wide of the truth. There is indeed now a new creation, and a new which is more glorious than the old. In the creation of the world God showed forth His power, His wisdom, His love; but in the foundation of the Church all these His attributes shine far more gloriously forth; and that Church was founded, the corner-stone of it, elect, precious, was securely laid, on that day when the Son of God, having taken upon Him our flesh, was born of a pure Virgin, and was laid in the manger at Bethlehem. Most fitly therefore was that day of the New Creation, which should repair and restore the breaches of the old, ushered in with hymns of gladness; most fitly did "the sons of God" once again shout for joy, and welcome, with that first Christmas carol which this dull earth ever heard, the birth of a Saviour and Restorer into the world.

¶ Handel, entering fully into the spirit of this narrative, represents the angel as singing this announcement; and there can be no doubt that he is right. This was a grand solo sung by one

[1] T. D. Bernard, *Songs of the Holy Nativity*, 116.

of the leading choristers of heaven. But when the angel had sung his solo, his companions joined in the chorus—"Suddenly there was with him a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men of good will."[1]

4. This song of the angels, as we have been used to reading it, was a threefold message—of glory to God, peace on earth, and good will among men; but the better scholarship of the Revised Version now reads in the verse a twofold message. First, there is glory to God, and then there is peace on earth to the men of good will. Those, that is to say, who have the good will in themselves are the ones who will find peace on earth. Their unselfishness brings them their personal happiness. They give themselves in good will, and so they obtain peace. That is the true spirit of the Christmas season. It is the good will that brings the peace. Over and over again in these months of feverish scrambling for personal gain men have sought for peace and have not found it; and now, when they turn to this generous good will, the peace they sought comes of itself. Many a man in the past year has been robbed of his own peace by his misunderstandings or grudges or quarrels; but now, as he puts away these differences as unfit for the season of good will, the peace arrives. That is the paradox of Christianity. He who seeks peace does not find it. He who gives peace finds it returning to him again. He who hoards his life loses it, and he who spends it finds it:—

> Not what we give, but what we share,
> For the gift without the giver is bare;
> Who gives himself with his alms feeds three,
> Himself, his hungering neighbour, and Me.

That is the sweet and lingering echo of the angel's song.

¶ The second member of the hymn celebrates the blessing to mankind, according to the A.V., in the familiar words, "On earth peace, good will toward men"; or, according to the R.V., in the less graceful English, "Peace on earth among men in whom he is well pleased." The literal renderings would be, in the first case, "On earth peace, in men good pleasure"; in the second, "On earth peace, in men of good pleasure." Two different readings are

[1] D. Davies, *Talks with Men, Women and Children*, v. 385.

thus represented, each of them supported by large authority. The difference is only in the presence or absence of a final letter.[1]

¶ Such was the text of the angels on the night of our Saviour's birth; and to that text our Saviour's life furnished the sermon. For it was a life of holiness and devotion to His Father's service, a life spent in doing good to the bodies and souls of all around Him; and it was ended by a death undergone on purpose to reconcile man with God, and to set earth at peace with heaven. Here is a practical sermon on the angel's text, the best of all sermons, a sermon not of words, but of deeds. Whoever will duly study that practical sermon, whoever with a teachable, inquiring heart will study the accounts of our Saviour's words and actions handed down in the four Gospels, will need little else to enlighten him in the way of godliness.[2]

I.

Glory to God.

1. "Glory to God in the highest." It is the first doxology of the gospel—brief words, yet bearing up the soul into illimitable regions of thought! Is it a proclamation—"There is glory to God in the highest"? or is it an ascription—"Glory be to God in the highest"? It is both; for ascriptions of praise are also proclamations of fact. Glory given to God is only some manifestation and effluence of His own glory, recognized by created intelligences, and reflected back in adoration and joy. So it is here. In the birth of a Saviour which is Christ the Lord, the mystery of the Kingdom has begun, and the glory of God has appeared. It is a glory of mercy to repair spiritual ruin, of wisdom to solve problems of sin and righteousness, of judgment to convict and condemn the powers of evil, of faithfulness to fulfil promises to prisoners of hope, of grace to conduct a history of salvation, of love to be manifested in the ages to come. This is the glory recognized by the heavenly host in the holy Nativity and celebrated in their responsive praise.

¶ The first words of it are, Glory to God! and a most weighty lesson may we draw for ourselves, from finding the angels put

[1] T. D. Bernard, *Songs of the Holy Nativity*, 162.
[2] A. W. Hare, *The Alton Sermons*, 80.

that first. A world is redeemed. Millions on millions of human beings are rescued from everlasting death. Is not this the thing uppermost in the angels' thoughts? Is not this mighty blessing bestowed on man the first thing that they proclaim? No, it is only the second thing: the first thing is, Glory to God! Why so? Because God is the Giver of this salvation; nay, is Himself the Saviour, in the person of the only-begotten Son. Moreover, because in heavenly minds God always holds the first place, and they look at everything with a view to Him. But if this was the feeling of the angels, it is clear we cannot be like angels until the same feeling is uppermost with us also. Would we become like them, we must strive to do God's will as it is done in heaven; that is, because it is God's will and because we are fully persuaded that whatever He wills must needs be the wisest and best thing to do, whether we can see the reasons of it or not.[1]

¶ The religious faith on which my own art teaching is based never has been farther defined, nor have I wished to define it farther, than in the sentence beginning the theoretical part of *Modern Painters*: "Man's use and purpose—and let the reader who will not grant me this, follow me no farther, for this I purpose always to assume—is to be the witness of the glory of God, and to advance that glory by his reasonable obedience and resultant happiness."[2]

2. How does the coming of Christ bring glory to God? It displays all the attributes of God to advantage. The general arranges his forces to display his wisdom; the orator arranges his arguments to display his power; the philanthropist arranges his gifts and so displays his mercy. In the coming of Christ we see wisdom and power and mercy displayed in their fullest and sublimest manner. The whole character of God stands out resplendent in faithfulness and love. How many promises were fulfilled, how many obligations discharged by the coming of Jesus! By setting forth God in His highest glory it brings glory to Him.

¶ The glory which lay hidden from eternity in the creative Mind began to disclose itself in the myriad forms of beauty abounding in the inorganic kingdom, in crystals of snow and ice, in sparkle of jewels, in the exquisite hues of precious stones, in splendour of sunrise and sunset, in glint of moonbeam and gleam

[1] A. W. Hare, *The Alton Sermons*, 80.

[2] Ruskin, Epilogue to *Modern Painters* (*Works*, vii. 462).

of star, in cloud, wave and sky—then continued to unfold with ever-increasing beauty and wonder as *Life*, that great magician appeared, the waving of whose wand inaugurated the organic kingdom, and changed the face of all things into a new Creation. Thus the unveiling of the sublime purpose continued, till through rudimentary forms of sensations, intelligence, and love, in the vegetable and animal kingdoms, it blossomed into completer form in Man, and finally broke into all fruition in Christ the glory of Eternal Love unveiled.[1]

3. But can God receive increase of glory, more than He has already? Is it not the very idea of God that He is infinitely glorious, and that this He always has been and ever will be? Assuredly so: in Himself He is as incapable of increase as of diminution of glory. But we may ascribe more glory to Him, more, that is, of the honour due unto His name, as we know Him more, as the infinite perfection of His being—His power, His wisdom, His love—is gradually revealed to us. So too may angels; and the heavenly host declare in this voice of theirs that the Incarnation of the Son of God was a new revelation, a new outcoming to them of the unsearchable riches of the wisdom, the power, the love, that are in God; that in that Church of the redeemed which now had become possible would be displayed mysteries of grace and goodness which transcended and surpassed all God's past dealings with men or with angels.

We have St. Paul in the Epistle to the Ephesians declaring the same thing; that heaven was taught by what was done upon earth; that angels, as they stooped from the shining battlements on high and looked toward this dim speck of earth and on one obscure province of it, and at a little village, and to one lowliest household there, learned about the mind of God things which they had not learned standing upon the steps of the throne and beholding the unapproachable brightness of Him who sat thereon. Can we doubt this? Does not St. Paul declare that he was himself set to proclaim the mystery which from the beginning of the world had been hid in God, more or less concealed therefore from men and angels alike? And why to proclaim it? He proceeds to give the answer: "to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places"—in other words, to

[1] L. W. Caws, *The Unveiled Glory*, 64.

the angelic host—"might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God." Here then is the explanation of the angels' song, of this "Glory to God in the highest," this melody of heaven, to bear a part in which they invite and challenge the listening children of men upon earth.

¶ Of God's goodwill to men, and to all creatures, for ever, there needed no proclamation by angels. But that men should be able to please Him,—that their wills should be made holy, and they should not only possess peace in themselves, but be able to give joy to their God, in the sense in which He afterwards is pleased with His own baptized Son;—this was a new thing for angels to declare, and for shepherds to believe.[1]

4. The glory thus manifested, apprehended, and given back, is "glory in the highest." What is intended by this superlative? What noun shall we read into this adjective? Things, places, beings, realms of space, regions of thought, worlds of life? The unexplained word embraces and exceeds all these. At least the angels knew their meaning, cognizant as they are of the gradations and levels of creation, the lower and the higher, the higher and the highest. Men may employ such a word with vague and partial intention; but angels know whereof they affirm, and the single word declares the glory of God in this Nativity to be no secondary manifestation in the common level of human history, but a fresh effulgence of His highest attributes to which the highest heavens respond.

There are some who take the word "highest" to mean that there is glory to God in the highest degree by the coming of Christ. God is glorified in nature—"the heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork." He is glorified in every dew-drop that sparkles in the morning sun, and in every tiny wood-flower that blossoms in the copse. Every bird that warbles on the spray, every lamb that skips the mead, glorifies God. All creation glorifies God. Do not the stars write His name in golden letters across the midnight sky? Are not the lightnings His sword flashing from His scabbard? Are not the thunders the roll-drums of His armies? From least to greatest the whole of creation tells forth His glory. But the majestic organ of creation cannot reach the compass of the organ of

[1] Ruskin, *Val d'Arno*, § 253 (*Works*, xxiii. 148).

redemption. There is more melody in Christ than in all worlds. He brings glory to God in the very highest degree.

¶ An Indian rajah has built over the grave of his favourite wife a mausoleum which is one of the wonders of the world. So perfectly and wonderfully is this built that a word spoken at the entrance proceeds from point to point and is distinctly re-echoed until it reaches the very topmost height. So would the angels have it to be in living glory to God. They would have all men praise God for His great love-gift, the praise proceeding higher and higher, gathering in volume as it proceeds, until it surges up against the throne of God, and bursts into the spray of ten thousand songs. Oh, let us praise Him! If angels did who were spectators, surely we ought who are recipients of such blessings. Let us say, "Highest! highest!"

Remember the words of Edward Perronet when dying, and try to catch his spirit:—

> Glory to God in the height of His Divinity:
> Glory to God in the depth of His Humanity:
> Glory to God in His All-sufficiency.
> Glory to God in the Highest![1]

II.

Peace to Men.

"Peace" how precious is the word! There is warmth in it. There is music in it. There is Heaven in it. What pictures it paints! We can see in this mirror-like word a hundred dear delights. A sky without a cloud. A sun whose rays are benignant. Fields rich in harvests, white-washed farmsteads looking cosy and clean on the hills and in the dales, cattle browsing in sweet content, workmen plying their common tasks in undisturbed serenity, no war or battle's sound creating feelings of dread apprehension in human breasts anywhere. Oh, lovely peace! But other and sweeter images are in that word: men and women find reflexion therein, with happy faces aglow with innocent pleasure, no strife in their hearts, their passions orderly and under correct government, their feelings pure, their emotions all noble, their aspirations all heavenly, their consciences tranquil,

[1] W. L. Mackenzie, *Pure Religion*, 105.

at peace with themselves, their neighbours, with nature, and with God. This is the peace that Jesus brings. The angels' song has set men dreaming, and the dreams are not unworthy; they have dreamt of peace in the workshop, the ending of the unhappy misunderstandings between master and man; peace in the home, the ending of all domestic disquietude; peace in the State, rival parties in unholy rivalry no longer, but all men's good each man's rule; peace betwixt the nations, the sword no longer to do its inhuman butchery, and the cannon no longer to be the cause of unspeakable horrors; but, beautiful as are all these dreams, and compassed as they are by the angels' words, they fall far short of what Christ's gift involves. The peace He gives is not superficial, but radical: it means, first of all, peace in man, peace at the centre of things. He does not make the profound mistake of beginning at the circumference; He works at the centre. He puts His peace into men, and the charm of it is sighted, and the power of it is felt, and the contagion of it is diffused. He influences the world within, and in that way the world without.

¶ Placed in the midst of Europe, the Emperor was to bind its races into one body, reminding them of their common faith, their common blood, their common interest in each other's welfare. And he was therefore, above all things, claiming indeed to be upon earth the representative of the Prince of Peace, bound to listen to complaints, and to redress the injuries inflicted by sovereigns or peoples upon each other; to punish offenders against the public order of Christendom; to maintain through the world, looking down as from a serene height upon the schemes and quarrels of meaner potentates, that supreme good without which neither arts nor letters, nor the gentler virtues of life, can rise and flourish. The mediæval Empire was in its essence what its modern imitators have sometimes professed themselves: the Empire was Peace: the oldest and noblest title of its head was "Imperator Pacificus."[1]

1. What then is this peace? Let us understand it as a fourfold personal peace.

(1) *The peace of an illumined life.*—No one can canvass the world's literature, listen to his fellows, or interrogate his own heart, and be unaware how chafed and bewildered men are apart from Christ. We are capable of thought, but our reflexions are at times of a mutinous and melancholy order. We appeal to what we call the

[1] J. Bryce, *The Holy Roman Empire*, 254.

master-minds of the world, but as we note the earnest, far-away look in their eyes, the pallor on their countenances, the grave lines which thought has carved on their foreheads, and the note of interrogation which is ever and anon upon their lips, we are distressed to find that the secret of peace is not in dreaming, inquiring, speculating. We listen to science, and it seems to clash with all our best thoughts and feelings. We feel that there is a God, and it smiles at our weakness and whispers, No, only a Force; we feel that we are greater than we seem, and it talks seriously of matter as though we were only that; we feel we ought to pray, and it laughs at our credulity; we feel that our life is unending, and it points with cruel finger to the grave. Science does not calm us; it chafes us. Where, then, can peace be found? Not in ignorance, for darkness evermore distresses; not in superstition, for error is disquieting; not in unbelief, for men have flung away rare and long-cherished beliefs for the incertitudes of intellectual charlatans, only to find that peace has deserted them; not in literature, for many a book is only the foam of a storm-lashed mind, and not a few are the progeny of a diseased pessimism; not in the voices of the world, for strife of tongues is sadly discomposing. Then where? Thank Heaven, fooled though we be everywhere else, and disappointed with the pretty lanterns which men have hung out to lighten the gloom, we hear the voice of Jesus say, "Come unto me and rest," and peace steals over us as He gives His gracious and sufficing answers to our sundry questions.

¶ I had a deep peace which seemed to pervade the whole soul, and resulted from the fact that all my desires were fulfilled in God. I feared nothing; that is, considered in its ultimate results and relations, because my strong faith placed God at the head of all perplexities and events. I desired nothing but what I now had, because I had a full belief that, in my present state of mind, the results of each moment constituted the fulfilment of the Divine purposes. I do not mean to say that I was in a state in which I could not be afflicted. My physical system, my senses, had not lost the power of suffering. My natural sensibilities were susceptible of being pained. Oftentimes I suffered much. But in the centre of the soul, if I may so express it, there was Divine and supreme peace. The soul, considered in its connexion with the objects immediately around it, might at times be troubled

and afflicted; but the soul, considered in its relation to God and the Divine will, was entirely calm, trustful and happy. The trouble at the circumference, originating in part from a disordered physical constitution, did not affect and disturb the Divine peace of the centre.[1]

¶ At the close of a sermon on the words, "The peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep (Gr. shall keep as by soldiers in a fortress) your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus," Dr. Duncan came up to the preacher with his own summary of the text, clinching it with his sharp incisive "What?" —his constant mode of eliciting assent to a sentence which in his own judgment was both justly conceived and rightly worded. His beautiful paraphrase of the text was this: "Christ Jesus is the garrison, and Peace is the sentinel."[2]

(2) *The peace of a purified life.*—We have had fair dreams of a peace which passeth all understanding. We have looked on the sea when it has been beautifully placid: of thunder there was none, but the waters made a murmuring music as they broke in cresting waves upon the beach. Can my life be like that? This imagination, can it be saved from the base dreams which are fatal to its pleasure? This memory, digging open long-closed graves and giving a resurrection to painful and hideous incidents, can it ever be satisfied? This conscience, may I ever hope for the silencing of its accusatory voices, the stilling of this inward thunder? This soul, which has so sadly damaged and deranged itself, can its equilibrium and equanimity ever be restored? Thank God, yes; in Jesus Christ we may find life and peace. Too impotent to emancipate ourselves from our bitter past, to free ourselves from the burden of our sin, to rectify our self-inflicted wrongs, to dispose of the disabilities which are the fruit of our unrighteousness, He comes to our conscience, to pardon our iniquity, to change our nature, to renew our hearts. "Peace on earth"; yes, that is the meaning of Bethlehem and the story of the great humiliation; that is the teaching of Calvary, with its all-sufficient sacrifice; we have peace through the blood of the Cross, and only through that blood.

¶ The Christian may have, *must* have, an outer life in the world, of training, toning, educating—in fact of "tribulation";

[1] Madame Guyon, in *Life* by T. C. Upham, 130.

[2] A. Moody Stuart, *Recollections of John Duncan*, 218.

but with equal certainty he has a true life, an inner life, "in Christ." The character of the inner life—as of the majestic life of the Eternal even in His Passion—is this, "in Me ye may have peace." Examine, then, some of the conditions of the Mystery of Peace. And think, I have called it (and rightly, have I not?) a mystery. It is no mere acquiring the right of rest by the sacrifice of principle, it is no mere buying of freedom from disturbance at any price, it is no mere "making a solitude" and calling it "Peace." No, it is an inner condition of soul realized, and blessed; and that it may be ours some conditions must be fulfilled. What are they? Sin must be forgiven, its weight removed, its tormenting sense of ever-reviving power attenuated, the wear and tear of its memories softened and relieved by penitential tears. This is a possibility of supernatural life; this is a result, a blessed outcome of life "in Christ."[1]

(3) *The peace of a harmonized life.*—Not a little of our acutest misery is due to an internecine war which rages in man, and which makes itself felt subsequent to our forgiveness and renewal. The Apostle paints an elaborate picture of it in the seventh chapter of Romans, and calls our attention to that dual self of which every nature consists: the flesh and the spirit, the law of the members and the law of the mind. Both strive for the ascendancy, and full often the battle waxes hot. Virtue contends with vice, pure instincts with unholy tendencies, aspirations of the heavenliest with desires the most hellish. Assuredly this is never the life of peace our God intends us to find. The human soul was never meant to be the scene of conflict so terrible. Can it end? Is there a deliverer? Thank Heaven, the Apostle found an answer to his question. With unmistakable clearness his voice proclaims that the strife can end, the discord can cease, "the life-long bleeding of the soul be o'er." Listen to him: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death."

Christ comes to restore our whole nature. As the able physician searches into the out-of-the-way places of our body, and shows no mercy to the microbes which would lay waste our

[1] W. J. Knox Little, *The Mystery of the Passion*, 168.

earthly house, but drives them thence, so Jesus has no pity for our carnal self. He tears it out root and branch, destroying the works of the devil, and making man at one with Himself and at one with his God. And this is the way of peace: peace at any price is not the will of our Father. We are not to be content with the peace that comes from making concessions to the carnal nature, or with sundry respites from the more serious strife, but only with the peace that comes from the complete rout of the foe, deliverance from bondage to the flesh, the elimination of the law of antagonism, the restoration of our inner life to its original homogeneity. To be spiritually minded is life and peace. And this, too, is peace on earth.

¶ Steep Cliff Bay is now a Christian village. A dramatic incident took place not long ago in the middle of a great native feast in North Raga. The biggest chief of the whole district was present—one of the few then still heathen. He stepped forward, and handing his war-club to the giver of the feast, announced that it was to be chopped up and distributed among the other chiefs as a declaration of peace and good-will.[1]

I heard the bells on Christmas day
Their old familiar carols play,
And wild and sweet
The words repeat
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

And thought how, as the day had come,
The belfries of all Christendom
Had rolled along
The unbroken song
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

Till, ringing, singing on its way,
The world revolved from night to day,
A voice, a chime,
A chant sublime
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

Then from each black, accursed mouth
The cannon thundered in the South,
And with the sound
The carols drowned
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

[1] Florence Coombe, *Islands of Enchantment*, 10.

It was as if an earthquake rent
The hearth-stones of a continent,
And made forlorn
The household born
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

And in despair I bowed my head;
"There is no peace on earth," I said;
"For hate is strong
And mocks the song
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!"

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:
"God is not dead; nor doth He sleep!
The Wrong shall fail,
The Right prevail,
With peace on earth, good-will to men!"[1]

(4) *The peace of a solaced life.*—We are not allowed to live our life untempted, untroubled. There are stern factors in human experience. There was a shadow even on the cradle of the World's Redeemer, and the shadows are thick on the lives of many. We are mariners, and while sometimes it is fair sailing, at others fierce euroclydons threaten us with wholesale wreckage. There are times when life seems almost unendurable. The troubles of our hearts are enlarged, hell attacks us with unwonted ferocity, the world seems cold and callous, sorrow grips us like a tiger as if it would draw our last drop of blood. Bereavement sucks all the sunshine out of our landscape, tramples on our sweetest flowers, silences voices which gave us cheer. Alas! alas! for the riddles of this painful earth. Well, blessed be God, here again Christ is more than precious. He understands us perfectly. Has He not been in the thickest shadows? Has He not braved the dreadest storms? Has He not fought the gravest battles? He brings peace to the earth. Wet eyes He touches with kindly hand, broken hearts He comforts and heals, desolate homes He cheers by His presence, reeling lives He steadies and supports by His grace, and in life's gravest vicissitudes He affords us the secret of tranquillity.

¶ Peace is more than joy: it is love's latest boon, and her fairest. I hesitate to speak of it: I know so little what it is.

[1] H. W. Longfellow, *Christmas Bells.*

One may have love in a measure, and joy many times, and yet be but a raw scholar in this art of peace. The speaker here, methinks, should be one far on in pilgrimage; or, if young in years, old and well-stricken in grace. "Well-stricken," whether the rod have been heavy or light; weaned and quieted, like a child, from a child; or, though it "have burned the hair and bent the shoulders," still weaned and quieted. "Peace," what is it? It is what remains in the new heart when joy has subsided. Love, that is the new heart's action, its beat; joy its counter-beat; peace is the balance, the equilibrium of the heart, its even posture, its settled attitude. It is neither the tide going, nor the tide flowing, but the placid calm when the tide is full, and the soft sea-levels poise themselves and shine—poise themselves because there is such fulness within them; shine because there is so much serenity above them.[1]

2. Have we any proper sense and feeling of this good-will? If we have, we shall be humble, inasmuch as we are saved, not by our merits, but by the love of God, in spite of our manifold demerits. We shall be thankful; for surely kindness like this ought to fill our hearts with gratitude. God's love toward us should beget in us love toward Him. Above all, we should be full of faith, trusting that He who has begun so excellent a work will bring the same to good effect; that He who for our sakes gave His only Son to live a poor and humble life, and to die a painful and shameful death, will together with that Son freely give us all things. We cannot suppose it was a pleasure to the Son of God to suffer the pains of infancy, the labours and mortifications and trials of manhood, the pangs of a cruel death. It was no pleasure to Him to quit the glories of heaven, in order to dwell in lowliness and contempt. Why then did He undergo all this? From good-will, to save man. And think you He will leave this salvation imperfect, and so render His incarnation, and birth, and human life and death, of no avail? O no! He must desire to finish His work; He must be anxious to make up the crown He has toiled and bled for, by placing in it all the jewels, all the souls, He can gather. He will never be wanting to us, if we are not wanting to ourselves.

¶ Think of it—The love of God! We use those words very often, and get no comfort from them, but think what human love

[1] R. W. Barbour, *Thoughts*, 2.

means,—a perfect oneness of sympathy and will with any near friends, and imagine that purified and intensified to Infinitude! The depth of our misery now is to me a witness of the immensity of the blessing that makes all this worth while.[1]

3. If we look closely at the expression "men in whom he is well pleased," we shall observe that this striking and remarkable description of men is parallel with the words used by the Father at the baptism of Jesus Christ. As Christ rose from the Jordan the voice of the Eternal said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. iii. 17). In the text exactly the same phrase is used of men. God is "well pleased in" men as He is "well pleased in" His beloved Son.

But in what sense can God be well pleased with men? He cannot be well pleased with their sins, or even with their folly. No! He is well pleased with men in so far as they are capable of salvation in Christ, are capable, that is to say, of being made Christlike. On the other hand, as He declared at the baptism of Christ in the Jordan, He is well pleased with Christ as being actually and already all that He intended every man to be when He declared, on the sixth day of the creation, that man, the final outcome and masterpiece of the evolution of the world, was "very good" (Gen. i. 31). In a word, Christ is actually what every man is potentially. Christ is the new Head of humanity, "the last Adam" (1 Cor. xv. 45). Christ realizes the Divine ideal of man. He is the proof and pledge of what every man may yet become. When the sculptor sees the rough, unhewn marble, he is "well pleased" with it, not because it is shapeless and rough and ugly, and for immediate purposes useless, but because it is capable of being chiselled into forms of enduring beauty and service. The incarnation of the Eternal Word is the definite, concrete, decisive evidence of what human nature can become when sin is eliminated.

¶ Jesus of Nazareth was God and man, not because His physical birth and death took place under conditions impossible to the normal human organization, but on the contrary because, having the normal human organization, in its entirety, He realized in and through it His absolute union with God, and became in actual fact what all men have it in them potentially to become. This divinization of humanity, this "incarnation," took place in

[1] *Letters of Thomas Erskine of Linlathen*, ii. 163.

Him at a certain time and place, under special historical conditions, which the gospel narrative enables us partially, but only partially, to reconstruct. The incarnation is not completed, the truth which Jesus proclaimed is not fully revealed, until the whole of mankind and the whole of nature become a perfect vehicle for the life which lived in Him.[1]

¶ Not long ago a gentle Christian lady went to a house of infamy in London to see a fallen girl whom she hoped to rescue. The door of that house was opened by one of those ferocious bullies who are employed in such establishments to negotiate between the victims and their clients. For a moment she was terrified at the fiendish appearance of this monster of iniquity. It was a low neighbourhood; she was far from home; she was alone. But, inspired of God, she resolved to appeal to the better self even of that foul and savage man. Taking her well-filled purse out of her pocket, she suddenly placed it in his hands and said, "I do not like to take my purse about here, will you please keep it for me until I return?" The man was speechless with amazement; a tear burst from his eye. She passed on. In that vestibule of hell she found the girl and arranged for her delivery. After some interval the lady returned to the door, and there was the man where she left him, with her well-filled purse in his hand. He restored it to her, not a single penny had been taken from it. For the first time in his life, probably, he found himself trusted by a lady. It appealed to all the courtesy and nobility that was left, or that was undeveloped, in his nature. He responded at once to that appeal, and proved worthy of that confidence.[2]

[1] R. L. Nettleship, *Memoir of Thomas Hill Green*, 48.
[2] H. P. Hughes, *Essential Christianity*, 284.

A Touchstone of Character.

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A Touchstone of Character.

Behold, this child is set for the falling and rising up of many in Israel; and for a sign which is spoken against; yea and a sword shall pierce through thine own soul; that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed. —Luke ii. 34, 35.

1. There are choice spirits selected by God, when the times are changing, to stand upon the ridge between two worlds, and to unite in themselves, so to speak, the best promise of the age that is passing by and the first gladness of the age that is coming. Now Simeon the Prophet was one of these men. It was his proud privilege to see the ancient prophecies fulfilled. It was his pathetic privilege to bid the new era welcome, and then himself to depart in peace. He saw the morning clouds crimsoning, and he told his generation what he saw. It was not given him to see the glorious noontide. But for one sublime moment he stood upon the mountain top. And it is well for us, even in this wise age, to know something of what he saw.

¶ Simeon, bravely patient, outlasts the time of silence: while the winds of God blow where they list, and gently stir the surface of his soul, breathing deep to sources of emotion, springs of thought, centres of will, and faculties of being, which all receptive and expectant wait for impulses of life, co-operant with the touch of the Divine. Intuition waits on growing consciousness: things seen afar become defined in detail: thought expands, impression greatens into form and shape: the Christ hath come, the morning breathes, the shadows flee away. Thus there comes a day when he is led under the impulse of the Holy Ghost into the Sanctuary of God. There he sees, he feels, he holds the Christ in likeness of an infant come, the Babe of Bethlehem. He bows before the Vision of the Lord: joyous yet awed he sings of Glory and of Light, Salvation for the World and Israel's Hope enthroned. And so he saw not death but Christ: and holding Him passed into Life, and felt within his soul the waters rise which satisfy, and fail us not but spring eternally.[1]

[1] A. Daintree, *Studies in Hope*, 76.

¶ The first pastor of Craigdam—Rev. William Brown, ordained in 1752—was enough to give character to any church. . . . His grandson, Principal Brown, remembers an old man describing a service conducted by the first minister of Craigdam at Knock, near Portsoy. One thing in the sermon which came to him and was indelibly imprinted upon his memory was the vivid and fervid way in which the preacher used the historical incident of Simeon holding the child Jesus in his arms:—"There did not appear to be much in the old man's arms, and yet the salvation of the world was dependent upon what was there—all was wrapt up in that Jesus held by Simeon." Then, holding out his own arms as if embracing that which Simeon esteemed to be so precious, Mr. Brown with tearful urgency of voice cried to the people assembled—"Have you, my freens, taken a grip o' Jesus?"[1]

Simeon the just and the devout,
Who frequent in the fane
Had for the Saviour waited long,
But waited still in vain,—

Came Heaven-directed at the hour
When Mary held her Son;
He stretched forth his aged arms,
While tears of gladness run:

With holy joy upon his face
The good old father smiled,
While fondly in his wither'd arms
He clasp'd the promised Child.

And then he lifted up to Heaven
An earnest asking eye;
"My joy is full, my hour is come;
Lord, let Thy servant die.

At last my arms embrace my Lord;
Now let their vigour cease;
At last my eyes my Saviour see,
Now let them close in peace!

The Star and Glory of the land
Hath now begun to shine;
The morning that shall gild the globe
Breaks on these eyes of mine!"[2]

[1] J. Stark, *The Lights of the North*, 288. [2] Michael Bruce.

2. Simeon looked far into the future, and saw the final goal of Christ's mission. He regarded Christ's coming as "a light to lighten the Gentiles," and the consolation and glory of Israel. But he also foresaw its nearer and more immediate effects. This Child, he says, who is to be the light of the Gentiles and the glory of Israel is also to be as a rock over which many will fall and on which many will rise, a signal for strife and gainsaying, a sword piercing and dividing the very soul, even where the soul is purest, and a touchstone revealing the inward thoughts of many hearts and showing how evil they are. Now, large as the contradiction looks between these two conceptions of the immediate and the ultimate results of Christ's influence on the world, is there any real contradiction between them? For if the Light is to shine into a dark world, or a dark heart, it must struggle with and disperse the darkness before it can shed order and fruitfulness and gladness into it. In such a world as this there can be no victory without conflict, no achievement without strenuous effort, no joy without pain, no perfection except through suffering.

I.

An Appointed Test.

"This child is set for the falling and rising up of many in Israel."

The expression is figurative and suggests to our minds a stone or step in a man's pathway, which becomes to him, according as he treats it, either a stumbling-block over which he falls, or a means of elevation by which he rises to a higher plane, and which is so placed before him that he cannot avoid it.

1. Jesus Christ is thus inevitable. He is obtrusive. He is there. He forces Himself upon our attention as every universal fact and law must. He is set as fixedly in the firmament of our spiritual and moral life as the sun is set in the heavens. He rides into every world of human interest and concern just as gloriously as the sun comes over the mountains at the break of day. You tell me you know nothing at all about astronomical law. You believe what wise men tell you about the stately march of the seasons and the procession of the planets in regular orbit, and you

disavow any knowledge of the inner mysteries of science. In your knowledge or ignorance you accept the fact you cannot alter, the fact that this world owes light and heat and colour and beauty to the sun which God has set to rule our day and night. Jesus Christ is as obtrusive and fixed a fact.

God "prepared" Him: pre-arranged, fore-ordained, and took steps beforehand for His coming; made ready the way before Him by His Law and by His prophets, by a gradual education of the world to desire Him and to find its need of Him; and at last brought Him into it "before the face"—in the sight—"of all the peoples," of all the races and nations of mankind, so as to be as much "a light to lighten the Gentiles"—a light (more literally) unto the unveiling of the Gentiles; that is, for the purpose of taking off from the Gentiles that "veil" of which Isaiah speaks as "spread over all nations," the veil of indifference and blindness and hardness of heart—as "the glory of God's own people Israel." The eye of the faithful old man was opened to see beyond the confines of his own nation; to embrace in one glance all the kingdoms of the earth in all time and in every place; and to declare that to each and to all Christ comes—comes to take off from them the veil of sin; and to fulfil at last the glorious prediction, "All flesh shall see the salvation of God."

¶ Freeman, the historian, in speaking about the fall of the Roman Empire and the overturning of the throne of Cæsar Augustus by the triumph of Christianity, finds in that event something which he calls more miraculous even than the resurrection of Christ. And certainly it was an extraordinary triumph. Within eighty years of the day Jesus was put to death as a common malefactor, a governor of one of the Provinces of the Roman Empire writes to his Imperial master, and asks, "What in the world am I to do? People are deserting the pagan temple, and are gathering in illegal conventicles to worship somebody who, it was always understood, had a name of infamy—one *Christus* who had been put to an ignominious death years before." Would you believe that before another three hundred years had passed, sitting in the seat of Cæsar was a Christian Emperor, and surrounding him a body-guard of Christian stalwarts, men bearing the stigma of Jesus, for they had been tortured and mutilated for their faith. Before another hundred years had gone, the throne had vanished altogether, and in the seat of Cæsar there sat one, and there still sits one, whose only right to be there is that he

claims to be there as the Vicar and Vicegerent of Jesus Christ. That was the historic triumph in the early ages. It is a triumph that is repeated every day. Through storm and earthquake and eclipse, through the coming and the going of the generations of men, through the founding and the overturning of Empires, through the migrations of the peoples, Jesus Christ moves steadily on.[1]

2. Christ's influence on men corresponds to their attitude towards Him. This is only to say that the spiritual world is not ruled mechanically. If Christ had come from heaven as a resistless influence for good, so that men could not but be bettered by Him, the result would have been mechanical—just as mechanical as anything which is set going by steam-power or by water-power. And yet, even in vegetable or brute nature, some conditions are requisite if physical reinforcements of vital power are to be of real use. The sun and the rain can do little for the sickly or withered tree. The greenest pasturage cannot tempt the dying hind. There must be an existing capacity for being nourished, in the tree and in the animal, if there is to be improvement. Much more does this law obtain in the spiritual world. For, being a spirit, man is free; he can accept or reject even the highest gifts of God. He is never coerced into excellence, any more than he is coerced into wickedness; he is, in the highest sense, master of his destiny. The truth and grace of God act upon him with good results only so far as he is willing that they should do so. God has made man free. He does not withdraw this prerogative of freedom, even when it is used against Himself; and the exercise of this freedom by man to accept or reject even his own highest good, explains the different results of Christ's coming in different souls.

¶ A departure from the perfect will of God was an absolute necessity if God wished to make a perfect or a good race of men. It is true God could have made men who would have had no choice but to serve Him, whose love would have been the result of law, whose worship a necessity of their condition; but would you care for a man who was made to love you, compelled to serve you? How then could God be satisfied with service that would not even satisfy the wants of our human nature? If love is to be real love, service real service, it must be voluntary and spontaneous; men must be free to give or withhold it. Now even

[1] A. Connell.

Omnipotence cannot reconcile two absolutely antagonistic things. It is past even the power of God to let a man have free will and yet not have it, to make men free and yet slaves; and if God gave men free will, then in the long run it was a dead certainty that some one so endowed would put up his own self-will against the will of his Father and exercise the gift which might make him worthy to be a son of God in a way that would drag him down to be impure and evil.[1]

II.

A Signal for Contradiction.

"A sign which is spoken against."

A sign is a signal. In the Scripture use, it denotes something or some one pointing to God; to God's being, and to God's working. Thus a miracle is a sign. It points to God. It says, God is at work: this hath God spoken, for this hath God done. And thus Christ Himself is a sign. He came upon earth to point to God. He came to say by His words, and by His works, and by His character, and by His sufferings, "Behold your God!" But this sign, like every other, may be, and commonly is, gainsaid or spoken against. For one who accepts it—for one who, because of Christ, sees and believes in and lives for God—many cavil; many reject and many neglect the Gospel. This has been so always, but most of all, when He was Himself amongst men. Then indeed gainsaying ran into open violence; and the Son of Man, despised and rejected of men, was at last given up into the hands of wicked men, to suffer death upon a cross of anguish and infamy.

1. Jesus roused the bitterest opposition of those whose falsity He exposed. Do you think it likely that Pharisaism and Jewish intolerance, the pagan gods and the thousands whose living depended on idolatrous worship, or the existing schools of thought, the Stoics and Epicureans, liked being pushed out of the way? A vast amount of interested selfishness and of honest conservatism necessarily opposed Christ—fought and died to keep Him out. Compare Jesus washing His disciples' feet with the moody Tiberius surrounded by an army of informers and abandoned to vile debauchery, and think what must inevitably happen before

[1] *Quintin Hogg: A Biography*, 309.

Christ is received as the King of Rome. Call to mind the amphitheatres of the Roman Empire, the hosts of slaves, and think what changes must take place before the cross could be elevated as the divinest of symbols. Read the description of the immorality then common, not in the lines of indignant satirists but in the admitted antecedents of the people who formed the first converts to Christianity, and think what changes in public opinion, what open collisions between classes, what terrible inner struggles in the individual soul, must needs occur before one soul could turn to Him who puts duty for pleasure, self-control for indulgence, self-surrender for self-gratification; who tells each one of us that we must die to live, die to our lusts, die to our tempers, die to our self-importance, die to the flattering idea of our own righteousness and goodness.

There came a man, whence, none could tell,
Bearing a touchstone in his hand;
And tested all things in the land,
By its unerring spell.

And lo, what sudden changes smote
The fair to foul, the foul to fair!
Purple nor ermine did he spare
Nor scorn the dusty coat.

Of heirloom jewels prized so much
Many were changed to chips and clods,
And even statues of the gods
Crumbled beneath its touch.

Then angrily the people cried,
"The loss outweighs the profit far,
Our goods suffice us as they are,
We will not have them tried."

And since they could not so avail
To check his unrelenting quest
They seized him saying, "Let him test
How real is our jail."

But though they slew him with a sword
And in a fire his touchstone burned,
Its doings could not be o'erturned,
Its undoings restored.

2. He offered Himself as a Saviour under an aspect incredible and offensive. He demanded an utter renunciation of human righteousness; He asked them to give their whole confidence to One who should die in weakness and agony upon the shameful tree.

For nearly three centuries, of course with varying intensity, the name of Jesus of Nazareth and His followers was a name of shame, hateful and despised. Not only among the Roman idolaters was "the Name" spoken against with intense bitterness (see the expressions used by men like Tacitus, Suetonius, and Pliny), but also among His own nation, the Jews, was Jesus known as "the Deceiver," "that Man," "the Hung." These were common expressions used in the great Rabbinical schools which flourished in the early days of Christianity. How different is it all now!

¶ "Where can we find a name so holy as that we may surrender our whole souls to it, before which obedience, reverence without measure, intense humility, most unreserved adoration may all be fully rendered?" was the earnest inquiry of his whole nature, intellectual and moral no less than religious. And the answer to it in like manner expressed what he endeavoured to make the rule of his own personal conduct, and the centre of all his moral and religious convictions: "One name there is, and one alone, one alone in heaven and earth—not truth, not justice, not benevolence, not Christ's mother, not His holiest servants, not His blessed sacraments, nor His very mystical body the Church, but Himself only who died for us and rose again, Jesus Christ, both God and man." [1]

III.

A Sword in the Soul.

"Yea and a sword shall pierce through thine own soul."

1. Simeon saw that the work of salvation would in some mysterious way be the work of a warrior, and that the same sword as wounded Him would pierce the heart of His mother also. This vision of a coming battle did not lessen his faith in victory, but it moved him to speak of things which were not in the salutation of the angel to Mary, or in the song which the

[1] A. P. Stanley, *Life and Correspondence of Thomas Arnold*, i. 34.

shepherds heard by night. Jesus is the prepared Saviour, and will finish the work given Him to do; but He will not be welcomed by all Israel. He will not fail nor be discouraged, but He must first suffer many things and be despised and rejected of men. Mary is highly favoured among women, and all generations will call her blessed, but the highest favour she will receive is to be a partaker in the anguish of her Son. The greatness of her privilege, and the exaltation of her hopes are the measure of her future dismay, while her Son advances to His goal through contradiction and death. "Yea and a sword shall pierce through thine own soul; that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed."

> In the huge temple, deck'd by Herod's pride,
> Who fain would bribe a God he ne'er believed,
> Kneels a meek woman, that hath once conceived,
> Tho' she was never like an earthly bride.
> And yet the stainless would be purified,
> And wash away the stain that yet was none,
> And for the birth of her immaculate Son
> With the stern rigour of the law complied:
> The duty paid received its due reward
> When Simeon bless'd the Baby on her arm;
> And though he plainly told her that a sword
> Must pierce her soul, she felt no weak alarm,
> For that for which a Prophet thank'd the Lord
> Once to have seen, could never end in harm.[1]

2. Must not the prediction that a sword would pierce through her soul also be a reminder that her unique position as the mother of the Saviour did not exempt her from the probation through which all had to pass who listened to the teaching and beheld the mighty works of her Son? But the commentators, with a unanimity which is unusual, resort to another interpretation. From Origen to Sir William Ramsay, they bid us find in the simile of the sword a picture of the sufferings which the career of the Christ would of necessity entail upon His mother. There is more difference of opinion when the attempt is made to determine the special nature of the sufferings which are foretold, the particular incident of her career to which the words apply. Some,

[1] Hartley Coleridge.

with reason, as it would seem, leave the reference vague and undefined. The Christ was a great Reformer. He was the leader of a religious revolution. He was therefore certain to meet with fierce opposition from the votaries of the ancient traditions and the ancient faith. He was a sign which would be spoken against. His life would inevitably be one of sorrow; and, with every anguish of her Son, the mother's heart would be torn. Others becoming a little more precise, would have us think of some unknown eclipse of faith, by which the Virgin's confidence in the Divine mission of her Son was clouded. Epiphanius, with no less imagination, will have it that Simeon foresees her martyrdom. But the dominant view, stereotyped in the words of one of the few Sequences which still remain in the Roman Missal, finds in the mention of the sword piercing her soul an allusion to the agony of the Mother as she watched her Divine Son hanging upon the cross, and dying the malefactor's death—

Stabat Mater dolorosa
Juxta crucem lacrimosa,
Qua pendebat Filius,
Cuius animam gementem
Contristantem et dolentem
Pertransiuit gladius.

3. The higher the privilege, the deeper will be the wound. "The nearer to Christ, the nearer," from the very first, "to the sword." The more real her title to be the "Blessed among women," the more real the anguish which would crush her spirit as she awoke to the cross which was to be the crown of His mission. The more genuine the love which treasured up the angels' song as she "kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart," the more intense the disappointment which "sought him sorrowing," not once, but again and again, and failed to find Him in His true being till Calvary and the opened sepulchre have made all things plain.

¶ Those who have seen Holman Hunt's "Shadow of the Cross," will remember how Mary is employed when she gets the first awful premonition of what her Child's fate is to be. She is engaged—so the painter fancies her—looking into a coffer, where the gifts of the wise men are preserved, feasting her eyes on the beautiful crowns and bracelets and jewels, so prophetic, as she

thinks, of what her Son's after-destiny is to be. And then she turns, and what a contrast! There, in shadow on the wall, imprinted by the western light, she sees her Son stretched on a cross! What a sight for a mother to see! As she looks, the solemn, mysterious words of Simeon flash through her heart, "Yea and a sword shall pierce through thine own soul." Against that awful destiny her mother's heart rises up in arms, and it was, I believe, this love, this misguided love, that led her to seek to keep back her Child from His mission, and point Him into a path of glory, not of shame; of royalty, not of sacrifice; of a crown, not of a cross.[1]

O Holy Mother, pierced with awful grief,
Oppressed with agonizing, nameless fears,
Beyond all human power of relief
Are these thy tears.

Thy tender, spotless, holy Babe lies there—
Is He unconscious of thine agony?
Doth He not even now thy burden share,
Thy sorrow see?

His Body sleeps; but ah! that sacred Heart
Is to His loved one's anguish still awake;
He only consolation can impart
To hearts that break.

The holy Babe awakes! In mute surprise
(As He would say—"Mine hour is not yet come");
He gazes in His blessed Mother's eyes
In pity dumb.

And once again her heart doth magnify
Rejoicingly, her Saviour and her Lord:
Yea! e'en before her tearful cheeks are dry
Is He adored!

Almighty Father, Thou hast veiled *our* sight,
The future Thou hast hidden from *our* eyes,
Great is Thy mercy! Lead us in Thy light
To willing sacrifice![2]

[1] W. M. Mackay, *Bible Types of Modern Women*, 325.
[2] M. Hitchin-Kemp, *The Ideal of Sympathy*, 19.

4. The pierced soul is at length healed. That is the thought Titian so beautifully renders in his glorious "Assumption of the Madonna" in the great Venetian Gallery. The framework of the picture is but legend; its truth is eternal. It depicts the soul of Mary as it passes, after life's sorrows, into the presence of God. The artist has painted her upturned face as it first catches sight of her Lord. It is a face of exquisite sweetness and beauty. And it is the face of the first Mary, the Mary of the Magnificat. Perfect faith is there, perfect joy, unsullied gladness. The piercing of the sword is now for ever past. But what most of all shines out from it is its sweet adoring love—the love no more of a mother for her child, but of a ransomed soul for its Saviour. The lips, as they open in rapture, seem to be framing the words sung long ago, but now uttered with a deeper, richer melody than was possible to her then: "My spirit doth rejoice in God my Saviour."

O Lady Mary, thy bright crown
 Is no mere crown of majesty;
For with the reflex of His own
 Resplendent thorns Christ circled thee.

The red rose of this passion tide
 Doth take a deeper hue from thee,
In the five Wounds of Jesus dyed,
 And in Thy bleeding thoughts, Mary.

The soldier struck a triple stroke
 That smote thy Jesus on the tree;
He broke the Heart of hearts, and broke
 The Saint's and Mother's hearts in thee.

Thy Son went up the Angels' ways,
 His passion ended; but, ah me!
Thou found'st the road of further days
 A longer way of Calvary.

On the hard cross of hopes deferred
 Thou hung'st in loving agony,
Until the mortal dreaded word,
 Which chills our mirth, spake mirth to thee.

The Angel Death from this cold tomb
Of life did roll the stone away;
And He thou barest in thy womb
Caught thee at last into the day—
Before the living throne of whom
The lights of heaven burning pray.[1]

IV.

A Revelation of the Heart.

"That thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed."

1. Men's inner life cannot be hid in Christ's presence. By their treatment of Christ Himself, men will show what they are. The veil will be stripped off them—such is the figure—by their own language and their own conduct towards Christ. By their estimate of His character, by their appreciation or disparagement of His holy life and mighty works and Divine doctrine—by their acceptance or rejection of Him whose appeal was ever to the conscience of man, as in the sight of a heart-searching God—men will disclose their true disposition; will show whether they love the world, whether they echo its lying voice, whether they desire darkness lest their deeds should be reproved, or whether, on the other hand, they are brave to see, and bold to confess the truth, whether they have an ear to hear the voice of God, and a will to follow Him whithersoever He goeth.

¶ The artist Rossetti has a picture in the foreground of which is a modest Oriental house, Jesus sitting in its room, His face just visible through a window. Along the street in which it stands is merrily hurrying that other Mary. I mean the Magdalene. She is arrayed in loosely-flowing garments, and her hair hangs dishevelled about her shoulders. With her is a troop of rollicking and revelling companions. The picture has all the suggestion of complete abandonment. But, just as she is to rush past, the woman's eye meets—what? Through the window the eye of Christ, clear as crystal, and cutting as any knife. It holds her, and tortures her. On her face is graven blank horror and dismay. The harlot is filled with self-loathing and self-contempt. Through Jesus the thoughts of her heart are revealed in their

[1] Francis Thompson.

hideous and revolting shape. "She trembles like a guilty thing surprised."[1]

2. Christ comes to heal as well as to reveal. His coming to men in His humanity, as Jesus of Nazareth, or coming to men in a preached Gospel, as the Living Saviour, is the one great test of men's moral condition, of their attitude towards God. He is the revealer of all hearts; and, for the most part, the revelation is humbling—it would be hopelessly humbling were it not that the revealer is also the Redeemer; and He reveals and humbles only as a necessary preparatory condition to redeeming. The sterner side of Christ's work is necessary; but the necessity arises from His persistently carrying out the purposes of Divine love. A man must be brought to "know himself," as only Christ can show him himself, before he will even care to know what Christ can be, and would be, to him. Blessed are all they who have stood in the testing light of Christ and been shown up to themselves. He who falls in presence of Christ is surely raised up by the hand of Christ. He who probes also heals.

¶ Lockwood had a religious mind, and retained through life his faith in the Christianity his parents had taught him. The chatter in the magazines about such matters had never interested him, and not even the symposia of eminent men, paid three guineas a sheet, about immortality had engaged his attention. He knew enough about human nature to know it was deeply wounded somewhere, and sorely stood in need of a healer.[2]

¶ I was reading a while ago a little book in which the author told the story of his own life, and in the preface he had written: "This is a book with but one intention—that in being read, it may read you." That is what might be said of the influence of the Gospels. They are the story of a life; but, in being read, they read you. They report to you, not only the story of Jesus, but the story of your own experience. It is not only you that find their meaning; but, as Coleridge said, they "find you." In his letter to the Corinthians, the Apostle Paul tells the same story in a striking figure. It is, he writes, as though the Christian were set before a wonder-working mirror, in which was reflected the glory of God. At first the image of this glory dazzles the beholder, and he puts a veil between it and himself; but gradually, as he looks again into the mirror, he discerns his own

[1] F. Y. Leggatt. [2] A. Birrell, *Sir Frank Lockwood*, 192.

features reflected back to him, but touched with something of that glory which was itself too bright to bear, until at last his own image is changed into the image of the Divine likeness, so that the looker-on becomes like that on which he looks. "Beholding," the Apostle says, "as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image . . . by the spirit of the Lord." That, he thinks, is what may happen as one looks steadily into the mirror of God. It is not that he shall be all at once made perfect, but that by degrees the veil shall be drawn away before the magic glass, and he shall see his imperfect thoughts touched with the glory of God's intention, until that which he is changes before him into that which he prays to be, as by the Spirit of the Lord.[1]

[1] F. G. Peabody, *Sunday Evenings in the College Chapel*, 28.

The Growth of the Child Jesus.

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The Growth of the Child Jesus.

And the child grew, and waxed strong, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him.—Luke ii. 40.

1. There is great significance in the fact, seldom appreciated by common believers or teachers of Christianity, that Jesus was once a child, with a child's thoughts, feelings, joys, griefs, and trials. Not only was He a man, and therefore nothing human was alien to Him but sin, but He was also a child, and no childish experience is unknown to Him or removed from His sympathy. He became a child, as Irenæus beautifully observes, that He might be the Saviour of children. He has sanctified childhood, as He has every other age and experience of humanity, by passing through it. And the light and sanctity of this Divine childhood still linger around every human child, as the ideal of the artist hovers over the statue he has wrought, making it beautiful by the reflection of its pure and perfect beauty.

2. The subject of the text is the growth of Jesus. "The child grew." Many read this statement without perplexity; but in all ages of the Church reflective minds have felt the difficulty of harmonizing the idea of progress with that of Divinity. The difficulty is undeniably a real one and may not be ignored; yet there would surely have been far more difficulty if Luke had said or implied that the Child did not grow. The Incarnation is a mystery which transcends our powers of explanation; but when once we have been told, and have believed, that Jesus was born and that Jesus died, we have left ourselves no excuse for doubting that the interval between these two events must have been filled up with years of normal human life.

3. First of all, then, we have the fact stated. Apocryphal histories of the infancy are full of marvellous tales; but none of

these is trustworthy, and nearly all are glaringly false. There are many blanks in the narratives we possess, but it appears that after the presentation of Jesus in the Temple, Joseph and Mary returned to Bethlehem, where, before long, the Magi found them living, not in the village inn where the Child was born, but in a private house, as Matthew incidentally mentions. When the wise men had departed to their unknown country, Jesus was carried into Egypt, whence, after the death of Herod, He was brought back into Palestine, and placed in one of the most beautiful and retired villages of the northern province. In Nazareth the Child grew up in quietude as a healthy, happy child, strong in body and in mind; and men saw that grace, or rather, the beauty of God, the Divine beauty of holiness, was upon Him. This brief, but most significant, memorial contains in outline the story of twelve years, during which "the arm of the Lord" dwelt in the lowly home which His heavenly Father had chosen as the most suitable of all the homes then existent on the earth.

4. Next, we see that His growth was natural. Think for a moment of the difficulty of conceiving a childhood in which Deity and humanity should be united, with no injustice done to either element. It is one of the evidences of the truthfulness of the Gospel narrative that it presents a perfectly natural and harmonious life, neither impossible to man nor unworthy of God.

The moment we look outside our Gospels we see what havoc the imagination was bound to make in attempting to fill up the outline by the invention of details. The Apocryphal Gospels of the infancy endeavour to assert the union of Divine power with human childhood by a series of grotesque miracles. One day the child Jesus cures a serpent's bite by blowing on it, and kills the serpent by the same means; another day He tames a whole den of lions, and leads them dry-foot across Jordan; another day He makes birds out of clay and claps His hands and they fly away. St. Luke, on the contrary, while ever ready to record miracle in its proper place, takes pains to describe the holy childhood as a simple and natural growth alike of body and of mind, in due subjection to the restraints of home, free from precocity and yet not without strange intuitions, prophetic intimations of an

unusual future, perplexing at the time but full of meaning in the light of later days.

Did angels hover o'er His head
What time, as Holy Scriptures saith,
Subject and dutiful He led
His boyhood's life at Nazareth?

Was there an aureole round His hair,
A mystic symbol and a sign,
To prove to every dweller there,
Who saw Him, that He was divine?

Did He in childish joyance sweet,
Join other children in their play,
And with soft salutation greet
All who had passed Him in the way?

Did He within the Rabbi's schools
Say "Aleph," "Beth," and "Gimel" mid
The Jewish lads, or use the tools
At Joseph's bench as Joseph did?

And sometimes would He lay His head,
When tired, on Mary's tender breast,
And share the meal her hand had spread,
And in her mother-love find rest?

We marvel—but we only know
That holy, harmless, undefiled,
In wisdom, as in stature, so
He grew as any mortal child.

All power, all glory hid away
In depths of such humility,
That thenceforth none might ever say
They had a lowlier lot than He!

And since the child of Nazareth
Set on it thus His seal and sign,
Who—till man's sin hath marred it—saith
That childhood is not still divine!

¶ The Evangelists record no incidents of the childhood of Jesus which separate it from the childhood of other of the children of

men. The flight into Egypt is the flight of parents with a child; the presence of the boy in the Temple is marked by no abnormal sign, for it is a distorted imagination which has given the unbiblical title to the scene—Christ disputing with the Doctors, or Christ teaching in the Temple. But as the narrative of the Saviour's ministry proceeds, we are reminded again and again of the presence of children in the multitudes that flocked about Him. The signs and wonders which He wrought were more than once through the lives of the young, and the suffering and disease of humanity which form the background in the Gospels upon which we see sketched in lines of light the outline of the redeeming Son of Man are shown in the persons of children, while the deeper life of humanity is disclosed in the tenderness of parents.[1]

¶ Luke the Evangelist speaks of the growth of the Son of Mary as he might have done of that of Samuel, the son of Hannah, or as Froude might of Martin Luther, the son of Margaret. It was gradual and natural, in body and mind, in its physical, mental, and spiritual characteristics. Every glimpse we get of the child, the boy, and the man, reveals the same full humanness. Neither boy nor man is abnormal. Nothing is artificial, mechanical, external: all is vital, natural, and inward. The mystery of His Origin and Nature notwithstanding, we must say, with Principal Fairbairn, "the supernatural in Jesus did not exist for Jesus, but for the world."[2]

¶ The words recall, and are meant to recall, three other childhoods:

(1) First, the childhood of John the Baptist. Of him too St. Luke has told us that "the child grew and waxed strong in spirit"; and still earlier he has related that many were led to ask, "What manner of child shall this be? And the hand of the Lord was with him." The parallel between the two children nearly of the same age is purposely worked out—the pious parents, the annunciation by the angel, the naming before birth, the prophecies of greatness, the long period of silent preparation for a unique mission. In each case the childhood was natural, the development slow and gradual, not forced and premature. In each case "the child grew and waxed strong in spirit."

(2) And in drawing these pictures St. Luke had his models in the past. Look at Samson's birth and childhood. His birth is announced beforehand by an angel, with the promise that "he shall begin to save Israel out of the hands of the Philistines"—

[1] H. E. Scudder, *Childhood in Literature*, 48.
[2] J. Clifford, *The Dawn of Manhood*, 35.

words with which we may compare the language of the hymn in St. Luke, "that we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us." Samson was to be "a Nazirite unto God from the womb," even as the Baptist was to "drink neither wine nor strong drink," but was to be "filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother's womb." And of Samson too it is written, "The child grew, and the Lord blessed him, and the spirit of the Lord began to move him." Those were wild times, and it was wild work which Samson had before him, and he was not always faithful in his doing of it. But his childhood was a strong and natural childhood, with its occasional intimations of a destiny.

(3) And if Samson's childhood is a forecast of St. John's no less clearly is Samuel's gentler childhood the prefiguration of our Lord's. Here, again, we have the child promised beforehand, and dedicated before birth. In each case "the handmaid" of the Lord utters her "Magnificat." "Hannah prayed and said, My heart rejoiceth in the Lord"; and "Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord." A difference we find in early training; for the child Samuel is given to the service of the sanctuary as a child. But in similar terms we read of his quiet growth: "The child Samuel grew before the Lord"; and again, "The child Samuel grew on, and was in favour with the Lord and also with men." Then comes the story of the voice of God in the house of God, itself a notable parallel to the Gospel of to-day; and then the words come once again that tell of holy growth—for this crisis did not suddenly bring the fulness of ripe knowledge of God and of life—"Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground."[1]

5. We have seen that the growth of Jesus was natural. But the question remains, How could that growth take place without sin? There are two conceivable kinds of development; one development through antagonism, through error, from stage to stage of less and less deficiency. This is our development; but it is such because evil has gained a lodgment in our nature, and we can attain perfection only through contest with it. But there is another kind of development conceivable, the development of a perfect nature limited by time. Such a nature will always be potentially that which it will become; *i.e.* everything which it will be is already there, but the development of it is successive, according to time; perfect at each several stage, but each stage more finished than the last. The plant is perfect as the green shoot

[1] J. A. Robinson, *Unity in Christ*, 157.

above the earth, it is all it can be then; it is more perfect as the creature adorned with leaves and branches, and it is all it can be then; it reaches its full perfection when the bud breaks into flower. But it has been as perfect as it can be at every stage of its existence; it has had no struggle, no retrogression; it has realized in an entirely normal and natural way, at each successive step of its life, exactly and fully that which a plant should be. Such was the development of Christ. He was the perfect child, the perfect boy, the perfect youth, the perfect flower of manhood. Every stage of human life was lived in finished purity, and yet no stage was abnormally developed; there was nothing out of character in His life. He did not think the thoughts of a youth when a child, or feel the feelings of a man when a youth; but He grew freely, nobly, naturally, unfolding all His powers without a struggle, in a completely healthy progress.

¶ The work of an inferior artist arrives at a certain amount of perfection through a series of failures, which teach him where he is wrong. By slow correction of error he is enabled to produce a tolerable picture. Such is our development. The work of a man of genius is very different. He has seen, before he touches pencil, the finished picture. His first sketch contains the germ of all. The picture is there; but the first sketch is inferior in finish to the next stage, and that to the completed picture. But his work is perfect in its several stages; not a line needs erasure, not a thought correction; it develops into its last and noblest form without a single error. Such was Christ's development—an orderly, faultless, unbroken development, in which humanity, freed from its unnatural companion, evil, went forward according to its real nature. It was the restoration of humanity to its original integrity, to itself, as it existed in the idea of God.

6. St. Luke not only says that as a child Jesus grew, developing as other children do, but he also tells us that He grew in every part of His personality. (1) He grew in body: "waxed strong"; (2) He grew in mind: "filled with wisdom"; and (3) He grew in spirit: "the grace of God was upon him."

Development ought always to take place in all these three ways. Let us take a little baby as our instance. First of all the baby begins to grow in body; it gets bigger, it gets stronger; it has power over its little actions; it begins to walk—it is a great time in the house when the baby begins to walk—and everybody

says how it is growing. And so it goes on, growing in bulk and in strength. Its clothes become too small for it. It grows on to boyhood or to girlhood; on to manhood, to womanhood; to strength and grace and beauty.

Now that is a marvellous thing—that growth of body. But, by and by, people begin to notice another kind of growth; something else is growing. This little one begins to walk; it also begins to talk, to notice things, to remember, to like and to dislike. Not only is the body growing, the mind is growing too. Presently the little mind will be strong enough to learn the alphabet, to begin to write, to begin to cipher, to begin to play on the piano, later on it will be strong enough to go to school, to college, and will, in time, become a learned man or woman.

Now that is a still more wonderful growth, for it will stop growing as a body, but it will never stop growing as a mind. You may find that child at eighty still growing, still growing, still learning, still advancing in wisdom. But, once more, if you notice the little one very closely, you will see that, not only does it grow in two ways—in body and mind—but it grows also in another way; it grows out of little faults into little virtues; out of little tricks of temper into patience, into power over itself; out of little selfishnesses into noble love. There are dolls and toys of the mind and there are dolls and toys of the soul; and as the body outgrows its clothes, and the mind outgrows its little mistakes, so there is something which is the best thing in man—the soul—which also grows; grows out of little faults and little wickednesses, and the unlovely habits of selfishness, till, by and by, men see before them a grand and splendid character.

i. Bodily Growth.

"The child grew and waxed strong."

The words are used of bodily development in size and strength. The Authorized Version adds "in spirit," but that addition does not belong to this verse; it has been taken in by some copyist or commentator from the eightieth verse of the first chapter, where it is used of St. John the Baptist.

¶ I think I am safe in saying that this exactest of writers would never have said about the youth of our Lord what he does

say, and says over again, unless he had had before his mind's eye the figure of a young man conspicuous among His fellows for His stateliness and His strength. The sacred writer tells us that he had the most perfect understanding of the very beginnings of our Lord's life, because he had himself seen, and had interrogated with a view to his gospel, the most trusty eye-witnesses of our Lord's childhood and boyhood and youth; till in this text we ourselves become as good as eye-witnesses of the laying of the first foundation stones of our Lord's whole subsequent life and character and work. And the very first foundation-stone of them all was laid in that body which the Holy Ghost prepared for our Lord as the "*instrumentum Deitatis*"—the organ and the instrument of His Godhead. You may depend upon it that a writer like Luke would never have repeatedly expressed himself, as he has here repeatedly expressed himself, about the growth and the stature of our Lord's body, if our Lord's bodily presence had been weak, as was the case, to some extent, with the Apostle Paul. In his famous essay on "Decision of Character," John Foster has a most striking passage on the matter in hand. Decision of character, the great essayist argues, beyond all doubt, depends very much on the constitution of the body. There is some quality in the bodily organization of some men which increases, if it does not create, both the stability of their resolutions and the energy of their undertakings and endeavours. There is something in some men's very bodies, which, like the ligatures that the Olympic wrestlers bound on their hands and on their arms, braces up the very powers of their mind. Men of a strong moral character will, as a rule, be found to possess something correspondingly strong in their very bodies; just as massive engines demand to have their stand taken on a firm foundation. "Accordingly," says Foster, "it will be found that those men who have been remarkable among their fellows for the decisiveness of their characters, and for the success of their great endeavours, have, as a rule, been the possessors of great constitutional strength, till the body has become the inseparable companion and the fit co-worker with the mind." It is an ancient proverb—"Mens sana in corpore sano"—a sound mind in a sound body—a stately mind and character in a corresponding bodily stature.[1]

¶ The human form is considered to be the highest expression of beauty and perfection for the following reasons. It is adapted to the greatest number of uses, its powers within the limits of its strength being certainly, as far as the hand is concerned, inex-

[1] A. Whyte, *The Walk, Conversation, and Character of Jesus Christ our Lord*, 40.

haustible. The erect form rises upwards, indicative of the aspiring mind, a characteristic not shared by any other animal. The beautiful head is poised on a splendid column, the neck, which is elevated from the base line formed by the spread of the shoulders. The balanced rotundity and flatness of the limbs; the lovely movements of the wrist and marvellous structure of the hand, its powers, as has been already said, apparently almost inexhaustible; the general harmony of proportion, several parts of the body being neither too short nor too long for beauty—these compare to advantage with analogous parts of the lower creation.[1]

¶ It is a pain to think of children living in conditions where they cannot grow in body as they should. Why are their frames so shrunken, and their little faces so pale and old-looking? Because they have no sufficient breathing-space in life, and no proper food to eat. In one of our seaports a church organized free suppers for poor lads one hard winter. At supper one night a superintendent noticed a boy who was not eating anything, and when he asked him why, the boy said, "I have been boiler-scaling." The superintendent, though he had lived in the seaport all his life, had never heard of boiler-scaling before. Very small boys are employed to go into the boilers of ships with a hammer to strike down the scales of rust that form there. They come out half-suffocated with rust-dust and with a bronzed appearance. For this work they get a miserable pittance of pay, though it is work that none but very small boys can do. They usually take a candle, but the lad who was ill at supper had been sent into a boiler which was so hot that the candle quickly melted, and he had to have a small oil lamp. The lamp fumes and the boiler-heat and the dust made the supper impossible, as you may well imagine. I daresay it would be true that the other conditions of that boy's life were not much more favourable to his growth. Thousands of children in this country, it is tragic to think, are doomed not to grow in body as they should.[2]

ii. Mental Growth.

"Filled with wisdom."

1. Sometimes the body grows and the mind remains a dwarf. After the mind has reached a certain point it may refuse to grow and want to stay where it is. Big men and women sometimes have very small minds. They may be six feet tall and weigh

[1] *George Frederic Watts*, iii. 8.

[2] T. R. Williams, *Addresses to Boys, Girls, and Young People*, 46.

ever so many pounds, and still have a little bit of a mind. Their aims may be low, and their ambitions small, and their sympathies narrow, and their affections stunted, and their ideas puny. They are mental dwarfs. Everybody who comes near them knows they are small. Their conversation is thin, their dealings are petty. They are cross and crabbed, and unreasonable and ugly, and very hard to get along with. They are hard to live with because they are so small. We sometimes call such people childish, and I have heard them called big babies. A little baby a few months old is the sweetest thing in all the world, but a big baby is one of the most terrible of all living creatures.

2. It is not said that Jesus was filled with knowledge, or with learning, or with great talents, or with great promise of great eloquence, though all that would have been true, in the measure of His years. But wisdom is far better than all these things taken together. "Wisdom is the principal thing," says the wise man, "therefore get wisdom." Knowledge is good; knowledge is absolutely necessary. Knowledge, however, often puffs up; but never wisdom. Wisdom always edifies. He grew in knowledge, you may be sure, every day. He passed no day without learning something He did not know yesterday. He listened and paid attention when old men spoke. He read every good book He could lay His hands on. He went up as His custom was to the Synagogue every Sabbath day. And then all that was turned on the spot into wisdom to Him, like water turned into wine.

¶ How common a thing is all learning, and all knowledge, and all eloquence; and how rare a thing is a little wisdom to direct them! How few men among our great men are wise men! Really wise men. How few among our own relations and friends are really wise men. If you have one wise man in your family, or in the whole circle of your friendship, grapple that man to your heart with a hook of gold.[1]

¶ Let us distinguish wisdom from two things. From information first. It is one thing to be well-informed, it is another thing to be wise. Many books read, innumerable facts hived up in a capacious memory—this does not constitute wisdom. Books give it not; sometimes the bitterest experience gives it not. Many a heart-break may have come as the result of life-errors

[1] A. Whyte, *The Walk, Conversation, and Character of Jesus Christ our Lord*, 47.

and life-mistakes; and yet men may be no wiser than before Before the same temptations they fall again in the self-same way they fell before. Where they erred in youth they err still in age. A mournful truth! "Ever learning," said St. Paul, "and never able to come to a knowledge of the truth."

Distinguish wisdom again from talent. Brilliancy of powers is not the wisdom for which Solomon prayed. Wisdom is of the heart rather than the intellect: the harvest of moral thoughtfulness, patiently reaped in through years. Two things are required —earnestness and love. First that rare thing earnestness—the earnestness which looks on life practically. Some of the wisest of the race have been men who have scarcely stirred beyond home, read little, felt and thought much. "Give me," said Solomon, "a wise and understanding heart." A heart which ponders upon life, trying to understand its mystery, not in order to talk about it like an orator, nor in order to theorize about it like a philosopher; but in order to know how to live and how to die.[1]

¶ One of the most pleasing of the poems in Christina Rossetti's "New Poems" is that addressed "To Lalla," the favourite name of her cousin Henrietta Polydore. The latter was only three years old when the poem was written. The lines incidentally point the moral that wisdom of the heart is better than knowledge of the head. It is a trite moral, but rarely has it been better expressed than here.

Read on: if you knew it
 You have cause to boast:
You are much the wiser
 Though I know the most.[2]

3. There is a distinction to be observed between His intellectual development and ours. We, being defective in nature, are developed through error. By slow correction of mistakes, we arrive at intellectual, by slow correction of faults at moral, excellence. But it is quite possible to conceive the entirely natural development of Christ's perfect nature, limited by time; the development, as it were, of a fountain into a river, perfect as the fountain, but not more than the fountain as a child; perfect as the rivulet, but not more than the rivulet as a boy; perfect as the stream, but not more than the stream as a youth; and perfect as

[1] F. W. Robertson, *Sermons*, ii. 182.
[2] Mackenzie Bell, *Christina Rossetti*, 21.

the majestic river as a man. At each stage greater than at the last, more developed, but as perfect as possible to nature at each; and as the water of the fountain, rivulet, stream, and river is the same throughout, self-supplied, perennial in its source and flowing, so was it with the nature of Christ, and with His growth.

A simple-hearted Child was He,
And He was nothing more;
In summer days, like you and me,
He played about the door,
Or gathered, where the father toiled,
The shavings from the floor.

Sometimes He lay upon the grass,
The same as you and I,
And saw the hawks above Him pass
Like specks against the sky;
Or, clinging to the gate, He watched
The stranger passing by.

A simple Child, and yet, I think,
The bird folk must have known,
The sparrow and the bobolink,
And claimed Him for their own,
And gathered round Him fearlessly
When He was all alone.

The lark, the linnet, and the dove,
The chaffinch and the wren,
They must have known His watchful love,
And given their worship then;
They must have known and glorified
The Child who died for men.

And when the sun at break of day
Crept in upon His hair,
I think it must have left a ray
Of unseen glory there—
A kiss of love on that little brow
For the thorns that it must wear.

4. Can we discover any of the means that were used in the development of His mind? We know not if there were schools

for children in those days, but the parent, and especially the mother, was the natural instructor of the child in all necessary knowledge, as she is the nurse and provider for its physical wants. What this Divine child learned from His human mother in those years of sweet and loving dependence, what wise questions He asked, or what wonderful sayings He uttered in that humble home, sayings which Mary, His mother, laid up and pondered in her heart, we may never know, at least in this world; for the lips of inspiration are sealed except in a single instance. But there were two oracles of instruction ever open, in which God spake to His Son, and taught Him, preparatory to His speaking through Him to the world He came to save. The first of these was the Scriptures of the Old Testament, that "sincere milk of the word" by which all devout and holy minds have been nourished, and have grown thereby. Jesus' intimate familiarity with the letter of Scripture, shown by His frequent quotations from it, evince how carefully He had studied the written Word—like the Psalmist, hiding it in His heart. And His profound and sometimes startling penetration into its spirit shows a deeper and more spiritual knowledge of it, such as no Rabbi or mere human expositor could have imparted.

Besides this, there was that other not less sacred book, or revelation, of nature, where God's thoughts are written and embodied in the things that are made. And of this book the child Jesus was a constant and diligent student. The vale of Nazareth is described by travellers as one of the most beautiful spots to be found in Palestine, or even in the world. St. Jerome rightly calls it "the flower of Galilee," and compares it to a rose opening its corolla. It does not command a landscape like Bethlehem; the girdle of hills which encloses it makes it a calm retreat, the silence of which is, even in our day, broken by the hammer and chisel of the artisan. The child Jesus grew up in the midst of a thoroughly simple life, in which a soul like His might best develop its harmonies. He had only to climb the surrounding heights to contemplate one of the finest landscapes of the Holy Land. At His feet lay the plain of Jezreel, tapestried with myriad flowers, each one more beautiful than Solomon in all his glory. Its boundaries were Tabor and Carmel, whence echoed the voice of Elijah; Lebanon confronted Carmel, and the chain of Hermon

joined its snowy summits to the mountains of Moab; while afar off glimmered the Great Sea, which, outlying all national barriers, seemed to open to Jesus that world which He came to save.

¶ Standing at Fuleh, and looking due north, you can see, some six or seven miles away, the green hills that embosom the village of Nazareth. How often from the hidden village, when the sun was sinking westwards over Carmel, must there have come to the top of the green hill overlooking the great plain the lone figure of a Young Man to look out over the great sea of beauty, and watch the slowly darkening plain, while Tabor, Hermon, Gilboa, Ebal, and the hills of Samaria still glowed in the sunset.

Skylarks to-day sing their sweetest over green Galilee; a thousand wild herbs load the evening airs with perfumes; the golden honeysuckles add their scent to that of the myrtle bushes along the pathways; and a sky of surpassing blue domes the whole wondrous scene. This village of the Nazarene is not even mentioned in the Old Testament. Strange fact! Yet from it was to go forth one still small Voice which was to shake the temples, waken the tombs, and bring the pillars of empire to the ground.

It was here, on these grassy hills, that those wonderful Eyes drank in, through three-and-twenty years, all that imagery of fruit and flower, of seed and harvest time, all the secrets of the trees, which afterwards became the theme of similitudes and parables. It was here the Master prepared to manifest all that infinite knowledge of soul and sense, the pale reflection of which, as it is found in the Evangelists, has come as a moonbeam over the troubled river of the lives of men, silvering the turbid stream, lighting the gloomy headlands, and shedding its benign rays far out upon the endless ocean in which the fevered flood is at last to rest.[1]

These are the flowery fields, where first
The wisdom of the Christ was nursed;
Here first the wonder and surprise
Of Nature lit the sacred eyes:
Waters, and winds, and woodlands, here,
With earliest music charmed His ear,
For all His conscious youth drew breath,
Among these hills of Nazareth.

[1] *Sir William Butler: An Autobiography*, 374.

The quiet hills, the skies above,
The faces round were bright with love;
He lost not, in the tranquil place,
One hint of wisdom or of grace;
Not unobserved, nor vague nor dim,
The secret of the world to Him,
The prayer He heard which Nature saith
In the still glades by Nazareth.

Yet graver, with the growth of years,
The step, the face, the heart appears;
The burden of the world He knows,
The unloved Helper's lonely woes
Till, when the summons bids Him rise
From that still place of placid skies,
Fearless, yet sorrowing unto death,
Jesus goes forth from Nazareth.[1]

iii. Spiritual Growth.

"The grace of God was upon him."

1. This word goes beyond all we have yet considered. It says that in these silent years the boy Jesus lived toward God; that within the life of home and school and play there was another life; that the child looked up to a Father in heaven, and by most simple faith brought Him into the midst of the scenes He saw and the duties He did. That word spoken to earthly parents in the Temple is a mysterious saying, to be laid up with many another in Mary's heart, to be read in the light of events long afterwards, and perchance to be mysterious even then. To us the most remarkable and revealing thing about it is the simple, devout familiarity with which He uses the Father's name, His manner of taking God for granted and of assuming His relation to Him. "Wist ye not that I must be in my Father's house?" This is no strange, sudden break from all His past, no discovery of His mission. His life hitherto has been leading Him to this hour. In the hills of Nazareth He had found a house of God where He held communion with Him; the poor synagogue of Nazareth was to Him His Father's house before He saw the great Temple at Jerusalem. In the home of Nazareth He found Him near. Every

[1] G. A. Chadwick.

duty of that lowly life bound Him to the Father. Those silent years were doubtless rich in experiences which are not written down, which were not told to any, but which were forming and confirming the faith in which He was to live and work and die.

¶ Christ's pure quiet life in Nazareth was the greatest fact in His whole great career. It was this life that gave significance to His death.

Nazareth stands for the home life. It contains the greater part of His great career. By far the greater number of years was spent here. Here were more praying for others and over the life plan, more communing with the Father, more battling with temptation and narrow prejudice and ignorance than in the few years of public service.

Nazareth stands for that intensely human life of Jesus lived in dependence upon God's grace exactly as other men must live. It was lived in a simple home that would seem very narrow and meagre in its appointments and conveniences to most of us. He was one of a large family living in a small house, with the touch of elbows very close, and with all the possible small, half-good-natured frictions that such close, almost crowded, touch is apt to give rise to.

He worked with His hands and bodily strength most of the waking hours, doing carpentering jobs for the small trade of the village, dealing with exacting, whimsical customers, as well as those more easily suited.

He was a son to His mother, an eldest son, too, and may be, rather likely, of a widowed mother, who leaned upon her first-born in piecing out the small funds, and in the ceaseless care of the younger children. He was brother to His brothers and sisters, a real brother, the big brother of the little group. He was a neighbour to His fellow villagers, and a fellow labourer with the other craftsmen. In the midst of the little but very real and pressing problems of home, the small talk and interests of the village life, He grew up, a perfect bit of His surroundings, and lived during His matured years.

And who can doubt the simplicity and warmth and practicality and unfailingness of His love as it was lived in that great Nazareth life? We will never know the full meaning of Jesus' word "pure," and of His word "love," and of all His teaching, until we know His Nazareth life. The more we can think into what it really was, the better can we grasp the meaning of His public utterances. Nazareth is the double underscoring in red under every sentence He spoke.

Those three years and odd of public life all grew up out of this Nazareth home life. They are the top of the hill; Nazareth is the base and bulk; Calvary the top. Here every victory had already been won. The public life was built upon the home life. Under the ministering to crowds, healing the sick, raising the dead, and patient teaching of the multitudes, lay the great strong home life in its purity. Calvary was built upon Nazareth.[1]

2. He grew in spirit by the exercise of His moral powers in resisting the temptations arising from mere natural desire, which needed to be controlled in Him as well as in all men. While the grace of God was upon Him and in Him, to inspire and aid His good endeavours, it did not supersede His own free moral agency. The discipline of life came to Him, as it does to all, and challenged Him to conflict; and He acquired moral strength and wisdom only through experience and trial, by overcoming whatever foe or hindrance lay in His path of holy obedience. And this was not an easy victory, but involved conflict, self-denial, and suffering. For we read that, "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered"; and that "he was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin"; which He could not be, without a real conflict between desire and will, between flesh and spirit. The difference between Him and other men was not in His exemption from trial and moral discipline, or in His impeccability or inability to do wrong, but in the fact that in Him the spirit, or will, never succumbed to temptation, but remained steadfast and sinless though continually solicited; while in others the will is often overcome, and so weakened in its power of resistance. The conflict in Him was to retain His integrity, in others to recover it. And the indispensable help in this conflict, without which no wisdom and no virtue can be established, was to detect the first approaches and manifold disguises of moral evil, and a reinforcement of spiritual strength from the infinite Source of all strength and wisdom. That charge so often made to His disciples afterwards, "Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation," was drawn from His own deep and life-long experience.

¶ You are not to think of "grace" here in its ordinary evangelical acceptation. But there is no fear, surely, of your making

[1] S. D. Gordon, *Quiet Talks on Home Ideals*, 112.

that mistake. You think every day and every hour of God's grace to you as the chief of sinners. And though our Lord thought without ceasing of the grace of God that had come to Him; it was not the same kind of grace as that is which has come to you. The grace of God has come to you bringing salvation. But the Saviour of men did not for Himself need salvation. More than one kind of grace came to Him, first and last. But not among them all the grace that has come so graciously to you. And it breeds great light on the kind of grace that came to the Holy Child when we turn from the fortieth verse of this chapter to the fifty-second verse, and there read that He increased in favour with God and man. The true sense here is the same as when a voice came from heaven to the Jordan, and elsewhere, and said: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." "The good pleasure of God was upon him," that would be the best way to render the text.[1]

¶ The highest reaches we can attain here are but broken fragments of the full Divine beauty. At the best we can only become dimly transfigured; only faintly does the beauty of the Lord appear in us. The last design made by the great painter, Albert Dürer, was a drawing showing Christ on His Cross. It was all completed, except the face of the Divine Sufferer, when the artist was summoned away by death. At the end of the longest and holiest life we shall have but a part of the picture of Christ wrought upon our soul. Our best striving shall leave but a fragment of the matchless beauty. The glory of that blessed Face we cannot reproduce. But when we go away from our little fragment of transfiguration we shall look a moment afterward upon the Divine features, and, seeing Jesus as He is, shall be like Him.[2]

3. This spiritual life, essentially in Him from His birth, had been naturally developed in His consciousness by means of external circumstances, and through the growth of His intellect. The first gleams of the consciousness of His spiritual life may have arisen through the influence of His home and of outward nature. A kindling influence then came upon His intellect in the religious journey to Jerusalem and the sights He saw at the Feast, and reached its culminating point in the conversation in the Temple.

Accompanying this dawning consciousness of the spiritual

[1] A. Whyte, *The Walk, Conversation, and Character of Jesus Christ our Lord*, 47.
[2] J. R. Miller.

light and life which dwelt within Him, there arose also in His mind the consciousness of His redeeming mission. We seem to trace this in the words "my Father's business." It does not appear, however, just to say that this idea was now fully defined and grasped. We should be forced then to attribute more to Him than would agree with perfect childhood; but there is no unnaturalness in holding that it now for the first time became a dim prophecy in His mind. It required for its complete development that the sinfulness of the world should be presented to His growing knowledge as a thing external to Himself. Sin so presented made Him conscious, by the instinctive repulsion which it caused Him, of His own spotless holiness; and, by the infinite pity which He felt for those enslaved by it, of His own infinite love for sinners; and out of these two there rose the consciousness of His mission as the Redeemer of the race from sin. This was the business which His Father had given Him to do. Clearly and more clearly from this day forth, for eighteen years at Nazareth, it grew up into its completed form, till He was ready to carry it out in the action of His ministry.

¶ I instance one single evidence of strength in the early years of Jesus: I find it in that calm long waiting of thirty years before He began His work. And yet all the evils He was to redress were there, provoking indignation, crying for interference—the hollowness of social life, the misinterpretations of Scripture, the forms of worship and phraseology which had hidden moral truth, the injustice, the priestcraft, the cowardice, the hypocrisies: He had long seen them all. All those years His soul burned within Him with a Divine zeal and heavenly indignation. A mere man, a weak emotional man of spasmodic feeling, a hot enthusiast, would have spoken out at once, and at once been crushed. He bided His own time ("Mine hour is not yet come"), matured His energies, condensed them by repression, and then went forth to speak, and do, and suffer. This is strength; the power of a Divine silence; the strong will to keep force till it is wanted; the power to wait God's time.[1]

[1] F. W. Robertson, *Sermons*, ii. 182.

Always at Home.

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Always at Home.

And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be in my Father's house?—Luke ii. 49 (R.V.).

Few passages in the Gospels exhibit more vividly the mysterious combination of the natural and supernatural, the Divine and human, in our Lord, than the brief narrative in St. Luke from which the text is taken, and which tells us all that we know of our Lord from His infancy to the commencement of His ministry. Though this single incident is the only instance in which the veil is lifted by which those thirty years or so of His life are covered, it is sufficient to cast a clear and bright light upon the whole of that period, and to reveal to us the spirit in which He was living; and it will be found also to illustrate the manner in which those who would fain be of service to God and to their fellows should prepare themselves for such tasks.

1. The first point that strikes us in the narrative is the evidence it affords of the perfect naturalness and simplicity by which our Lord's life at this period is marked. The picture of His tarrying behind in Jerusalem, Joseph and His mother not knowing of it, but going a day's journey, supposing Him to have been in the company, exhibits Him as living a free and trustful life, like other children, mixing with those of His own age, and in affectionate intercourse with His parents' kinsfolk and acquaintances. The perfect freedom from anxiety about the child shown by the conduct of Joseph and Mary at the outset implies an absence of any unusual strictness or formality in their relations with Him. It is a piece of child-life such as might have been seen in any other affectionate and pious Jewish household attending the feast at Jerusalem. Perhaps more suggestive still of the absence from our Lord's character, at this period, of any of those unnatural

features which characterize apocryphal accounts of His childhood is the fact of Joseph and His mother seeking for Him, for three days, in every place but that in which He was at last found—in the ordinary homes and haunts of children, as it would seem, and not in circles devoted to learning or pious meditation. His question, indeed, in answer to their remonstrance, implies that they might have known more of His character than this. "Son," said His mother, "why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I sought thee sorrowing." And He said unto them, "How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be in my Father's house?"

That Mary's thoughts were not at once directed to the Temple is a striking illustration of the absence—if the word may be used for the purpose of contrast—of unusual professions or pretensions in our Lord's ordinary conduct. His parents seem to have expected Him throughout to do as other children did, and to be found where other children were; and even when He gave them the explanation just quoted "they understood not the saying which he spake unto them." Nor did He even then pursue any special or unusual way of life. The fascination exercised over Him by His Father's house, and by this interview with the great teachers of the law, did not divert Him from the ordinary paths of a child's or a young man's life; but "he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them"; and He increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.

O happy pair of Nazareth,
 Who saw the early light
Of Him who dawned upon the world
 As dawns the day on night.

Within their home they saw the Child
 That lived the perfect love,
A love like that which rules the heart
 Of the great God above.

His childish voice and kindly tone,
 His pure and patient face,
His tender mercies shown to all,
 With never-ceasing grace;

The way He bore His youthful cross,
The reasons for His tears,
The kind of things which gave Him joy—
Unchanged through growing years,—

At home and in the playground throng,
They saw these heavenly ways,
And grew increasingly to speak
With words of reverent praise.

That simple, lovely, wondrous life
Betrayed itself from heaven;
He was the Child that should be born,
The Son that should be given.

He grew in stature and in praise,
By honest hearts adored,
Till in that home where He was born
His brothers called Him Lord.[1]

2. How is the text to be translated? The Authorized Version is "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" The Revisers have changed this into "Wist ye not that I must be in my Father's house?" The Greek, taken literally, says, "Wist ye not that I must be in the —— of my Father?" The Authorized Version supplies "business"; the Revised, "house." There is no noun in the Greek, and the article "the" is in the plural. To translate it as literally as it can be translated, making of it an English sentence, the saying stands, "Wist ye not that I must be in the things of my Father?" The plural article implies the English "things"; and the question is then, What things does He mean? The word might mean affairs or business. On the other hand we might translate, "Wist ye not that I must be in my Father's?" Then, in almost all languages "house" would be understood. We commonly say to one another, "I am going down to my father's," or "I shall spend the evening at my brother's." Everybody knows that we mean "house," and that is just how the Greek here runs.

(1) Both translations are linguistically correct, but the Greek phrase is most common in the sense of "in my Father's house";

[1] B. Waugh, in *Hymns of Faith and Life*, 95.

and this is the translation of the Syriac, of the Fathers, and of most modern commentators. "My Father's house" seems also most relevant in this connexion, where the folly of seeking is emphasized—the certainty of His place is more to the point than that of His occupation.

(2) But, as Alford properly enough says, we must not exclude the wider sense which embraces all places and employment of "my Father's." The locality carried the occupation with it, for why must He be in the Father's house but to be about the Father's business, "to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple"?

At the same time it is not wise to attempt to combine both translations in one exposition. We shall find sufficient material here for two sermons. Then, if we take first the translation of the Revisers, we shall see that Jesus, by His question, "Wist ye not that I must be in my Father's house?" claimed the freedom of a "child of the law." But freedom from parental control was at the same moment recognized as a greater obedience and deeper responsibility—the responsibility of a Son to the Divine Father. And so from that moment He is to be found at home, not with earthly parents, but with the Father in heaven, whether in His Temple, where worship is wont to be made, or in the wider universe of His presence.

I.

Freedom.

1. In the question of the text Jesus claimed His full liberty. He could not deny Himself the right to act for Himself, to inquire for Himself, to make good His own independence. The hour has struck for Him when He must break through the limitations and restraints of His childhood, and must choose His own way of going about His Father's business. He has responsibilities towards that Father which He must fulfil, even though at the cost of some severance from the tender ties of home, yea, even at the cost of some pain to the mother whom He loves so dearly. Remember that, to a Jewish boy, reaching the age of twelve made an epoch, because He then became "a son of the

law," and took upon himself the religious responsibilities which had hitherto devolved upon his parents.

¶ When He had completed His twelfth year, on His thirteenth birthday, Jesus would be recognized as a young man, and called "a son of the law." For at this time every Hebrew lad had his fate put into his own hands, and became responsible for his own actions. Up to this time his parents were held to be responsible for him: now he had to answer for himself both to man and to God. On the morning of this day he put on for the first time the two phylacteries which every Jew wore when he prayed, one on the head, and the other on the left arm. These phylacteries were small square boxes made of parchment, which were attached to the arm and the forehead by long slender straps; in each box there were four tiny cells; and in each cell there was put a strip of vellum on which was written a passage from the books of Exodus and Deuteronomy (Ex. xii. 2–10, 11–16: and Deut. xi. 13–22, vi. 4–9). On this thirteenth birthday, before morning prayer, the lad put on, first, the phylactery for the left arm, saying: "Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who hast sanctified us with Thy commandments, and enjoined us to put on phylacteries." Then he put on the phylactery for the forehead, and uttered a similar thanksgiving. From this moment he was regarded as "a son of the law," or "a son of the commandments"; *i.e.* he was bound to keep all the commandments of God; bound, therefore, to be always about his Father's business, doing God's will in whatever he did; bound also to go up to Jerusalem at the annual Feasts, and to sit at the feet of the Temple doctors.[1]

2. Is this freedom which Christ claims the prerogative of His sole Sonship—of His unique relation to the Father? Have we no part or lot in that demand? Surely that Sonship of His has been made ours. Into its prerogatives we are baptized. In Christ, by Christ, we too are endowed with peculiar responsibilities. We are given authority to become the sons of God. We have rights in the Father's house. In Him, in His body, each individual soul wins a higher value, a fuller freedom. Its freedom of development, its freedom of judgment, its freedom of thought, its freedom of action—these are not lost or diminished; they are intensified, braced, enriched, by those who are born into that Spirit of liberty which bloweth, as the wind, where it listeth.

[1] Samuel Cox.

¶ Mr. Frederic Harrison, with whom, as a fellow-teacher at the Working Men's College, Ruskin had become acquainted, was often at Denmark Hill in these years, and has thus described the father and the son:—

"John James Ruskin, the father, certainly seemed to me a man of rare force of character; shrewd, practical, generous, with pure ideals both in art and life. With unbounded trust in the genius of his son, he felt deeply how much the son had yet to learn. I heard the father ask an Oxford tutor if he could not 'put John in the way of some scientific study of Political Economy.' 'John! John!' I have heard him cry out, 'what nonsense you are talking!' when John was off on one of his magnificent paradoxes, unintelligible as Pindar to the sober, Scotch merchant. . . . There were moments when the father seemed the stronger in sense, breadth, and hold on realities. And when John was turned of forty, the father still seemed something of his tutor, his guide, his support. The relations between John Ruskin and his parents were among the most beautiful things that dwell in my memory. . . . This man, well past middle life, in all the renown of his principal works, who, for a score of years, had been one of the chief forces in the literature of our century, continued to show an almost child-like docility towards his father and his mother, respecting their complaints and remonstrances, and gracefully submitting to be corrected by their worldly wisdom and larger experience. The consciousness of his own public mission and the boundless love and duty that he owed to his parents could not be expressed in a way more beautiful. One could almost imagine it was in the spirit of the youthful Christ when He said to His mother, 'Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?'"[1]

¶ In the world of practical affairs the mother of Phillips Brooks showed herself eminently sane and wise. Her home circle was itself a means of liberal education. Experience had instilled into her a strong respect for the individuality of her children. They must be left free to shape their own lives, to follow their own destiny. She would force no confidence that was not freely and spontaneously given. She studied her opportunities of approach to them. This is how she speaks to an anxious mother who sought her counsel as to the training of her sons: "There is an age when it is not well to follow or question your boys too closely. The period of which I speak appears to be one in which the boy dies and the man is born; his individuality rises up before him and he is dazed and almost overwhelmed by

[1] E. T. Cook, *The Life of Ruskin*, i. 482.

his first consciousness of himself. I have always believed that it was then that the Creator was speaking with my sons, and that it was good for their souls to be left alone with Him, while I, their mother, stood trembling, praying and waiting, knowing that when the man was developed from the boy, I should have my sons again, and there would be a deeper sympathy than ever between us." And so it came about that in later years the sympathy between Phillips Brooks and his mother became more strong and complete than ever. "The happiest part of my happy life," said the great preacher, "has been my mother." When on his visit to England he was commanded to preach before Queen Victoria, some one asked him if he felt at all afraid. "No," he replied, smiling, "I have preached before my mother." [1]

II.

Responsibility.

With the knowledge of His freedom there came also the conviction to Jesus that His first opportunity of obedience to His Father was now before Him, and that it must be instantly attended to, without reference to any other claims upon Him, such, for instance, as returning to Nazareth with His parents. Hitherto, in His quiet Nazareth home, neither such knowledge nor opportunity had presented itself. To do His mother's will and to please Joseph, His foster-father, was the full extent of His will and duty. That He did these well and truly goes without saying. Since coming to Jerusalem to attend the feast of Passover, a new crisis had come to Him, and He did not suffer that opportunity to recede from His obedient heart, but embraced it at once, and gave Himself up with calm and determined enthusiasm to attend to it.

¶ Both Joseph and Mary were speechless as soon as the Holy Child let them see how full of folly their conduct had been and how much they had misunderstood Him and hurt Him. They had treated Him as if He had taken the Passover much too seriously. They found fault with Him for His devotion to His Father's business, and they uttered aloud their complaint and grievance with Him before the whole temple. They said it till the astonished doctors heard them, that He should have been home in Nazareth by this time, and back at His proper work.

[1] J. Gregory, *Phillips Brooks*, 44.

The lamb had been slain, they said, and its blood had been sprinkled on them and on Him for another year,—let Him come away home then, like all His kinsfolk and acquaintances. And if we will only look well, we shall see ourselves in all that as in a glass. For we are Joseph and Mary over again in all that. We also treat our Redeemer as if He had been religious over-much in the dreadful business of our redemption. We treat Him and His redemption of our souls as if He had taken us and our sins far too much to heart; almost as if He had been a martyr by mistake. They did Him the first wrong that week to suppose that He was in that home-hurrying company; and then they still more wronged and wounded Him by the places in which they sought Him; but above all, by their not seeking Him first in His Father's house and about His Father's business.[1]

¶ I should like to speak for a moment to the young, about those feelings of capacity, and that conviction of being called to high duty, by which many are stirred in secret—feelings which too seldom find their justification in the facts of after life. If such thoughts are made known to other people, they are often smiled at as mere childish dreamings, or are chided as the evil fruit and sickly food of vanity, rather than the outcome of a heavenly impulse. But however crude and mixed with idle vanity these musings may be, they are the smoking flax which God will never quench, and which wise men will try to fan into a flame. We cannot possibly be wrong in thinking that we were sent into the world to be nobler and more useful than are most of those we see around. The sad thing is, not that such thoughts are common, but that they are so easily and generally lost. Some of the most degraded people now living, and thousands of miserable seekers after pleasure and pelf, once had these thoughts and feelings, and in sanest moments they know that it is their shame and sin that none of these great thoughts have been transmuted into deeds. Some have lost their aspirations because too indolent to cultivate and use their talents. Some gave themselves to pleasures which developed into vices. Some surrendered their hearts to the love of money, and, because determined to be rich, fell into a snare and became avaricious, deceitful and dishonest; then, ceasing to respect themselves, they sank into deserved contempt. Others in their impatient thirst for distinction wasted their strength in the pursuit of quickly won successes, cheap applause, and instant recognition; instead of resolving to do good work, and show themselves approved to God, content to leave their honours and rewards to Him. This last named cause of

[1] A. Whyte, *The Walk, Conversation, and Character of Jesus Christ our Lord*, 64.

failure is probably one of the least contemptible, and therefore one of the most frequent and fatal of the forms under which temptation assails the young and ardent. Just as eager but inexperienced mountain climbers often weary themselves by hastening up the nearest slopes and peaks, and fail to win the true summit because the day is too far spent before the right path is found, so many noble and aspiring souls miss the attainment of true greatness, not through idleness or mean designs, but through headstrong haste to reach the goal without treading all the intermediate steps.[1]

1. Here, then, is a life which has already found its principle. Every life which has any value or any force finds a ruling principle or purpose which steadily guides it. It may be a principle of enjoyment, or of selfishness, or of ambition, or of usefulness; but whichever it is, it directs the energies. There are, indeed, lives more or less without any such principle at all, but they are feeble things; they drift rather than live, they aim at nothing and accomplish nothing. To take a wrong line strongly and consistently is almost better than such empty weakness.

¶ Of the purpose he set before himself when beginning to study art he once said to me: "From the very first I determined to do the very best possible to me; I did not hope to make a name, or think much about climbing to the top of the tree, I merely set myself to do the utmost I could, and I think I may say I have never relaxed; to this steady endeavour I owe everything. Hard work, and keeping the definite object of my life in view, has given me whatever position I now have. And I may add, what I think is an encouragement to others, that very few have begun life with fewer advantages, either of health, wealth or position, or any exceptional intellect. Any success I may have had is due entirely to steadiness of purpose."[2]

2. We may call this principle of life a sense of responsibility. The word is perhaps stiff and abstract, and yet I think it helps us to part of the truth. "I must be about my Father's business," or, if we take the R.V., "in my Father's house"; it comes to nearly the same thing. "I must be." He is not His own. He belongs to His Father. He owes to Him His life and its powers. How it reminds us of what He said afterwards to others—that

[1] T. V. Tymms, *The Private Relationships of Christ*, 59.

[2] *George Frederic Watts*, i. 17.

except a man become as a child he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God; and of what St. John said about Him—that He brought those who believed on Him to become sons of God! Responsibility, then, answerableness to another for His life and His use of it, but that other His Heavenly Father, whom it was the joy of His loving heart to serve—there is the principle and purpose which we find at the heart of Him at twelve years old; it will go with Him through life. It will be there still when with dying lips He will cry, "It is finished!"—finished, the work God gave Him to do; "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

¶ A few days before the first number of the *War Cry* was sent out to the world, General Booth gave a remarkable address at Darlington, which is recorded in this issue under the title of "The Baptism of Fire," and in which he said: "I want to say something this morning that will help you in the personal conflicts of your daily experience, and in the great warfare you are waging with the principles and principalities and devilries around you. You are the soldiers of Salvation, and the responsibilities of the war are all upon your heads. Now there is in English law a curious fiction by which no man who once becomes a clergyman of the Church of England can ever cease to be one. If he goes into the greengrocery line he is still a reverend: if he goes to prison he is still a clergyman: and I suppose, nay, I am sure, he will go up to the judgment-bar to be dealt with in the light of all the solemn responsibilities implied in such a position. Now, although by cowardice, or unfaithfulness, or disobedience, or other infamous action, you may be deemed unworthy of your position and drummed out of God Almighty's Army—covered with disgrace and infamy—still the memories of your position and the responsibilities of what you might have accomplished in it, will cleave to you, and grow upon you, and haunt you, and harrow you for evermore. How important, then, for you to be faithful."[1]

3. In the Son we are made free with the freedom of the Son. And, at certain special hours of our life, this freedom will assert itself. But then, let us be sure of this—that this heightened freedom must heighten also the severe responsibility with which it is exercised. It is this that we are so apt to forget. "Freedom," "liberty,"—the words sound to us as if they set us loose from responsibilities. Yet, claimed as they are by us, not in our individual capacity, but as children of God, as members of Christ's

[1] T. F. G. Coates, *The Prophet of the Poor*, 107.

Body, they must be held in trust to the Father who gave them; in trust to the Son, "the Head," in whose name we act.

¶ Boys and girls, and for that matter grown folks too, sometimes have curious notions of liberty. To be free they think is to be able to do just what one pleases. But true freedom is the power to do what we ought to do. A dead leaf falling from a bough has power to do just what it pleases, because it is dead, and no one cares how much it eddies or where it falls. But the big earth in travelling round the sun is very careful not to get outside its appointed path, for if it should wander even a little from the path which God has marked out it would upset all the life upon its surface. The earth is far freer than an autumn leaf. It gets its freedom from the sun. If we were only dead autumn leaves we could drift and eddy hither and thither and do anything we pleased; but being immortal souls, created in God's image, we have a mighty work to do and should keep the orbit which our Father's love has traced.[1]

4. Always to the free man must the concerns of God be paramount. "What doth the Lord require of thee?" is the first and last question. Still it cannot be denied in any thoughtful consideration of the subject that the concerns of men are the concerns of God. Our place is in a human world, and all our palpable relations are human relations. Our conceptions of duty can be framed only by the suggestions which our contact with men affords. But here we encounter the fact of individual responsibility. Life is serious. Each one must decide for himself, acting from the intuitions of his own soul, and in the light which comes from the circumstances by which he is surrounded. The seductive voices of ease or temporal advantage must be unheeded. Not even may public opinion in such exigencies control. The choice must be made under the behest of conscience. The voice of God is the only voice which may bid the soul be still and listen; and when the choice is made the interrogatory may be fearlessly put to all the world: "Wist ye not that I must be in my Father's house?"

¶ When men begin all their works with the thought of God, acting for His sake and to fulfil His will, when they ask His blessing on themselves and their life, pray to Him for the objects they desire, and see Him in the event, whether it be according to

[1] C. E. Jefferson, *My Father's Business*, 113.

their prayers or not, they will find everything that happens tend to confirm them in the truths about Him which live in their imagination, varied and unearthly as those truths may be. Then they are brought into His presence as a Living Person, and are able to hold converse with Him, and that with a directness and simplicity, with a confidence and intimacy, *mutatis mutandis*, which we use towards an earthly superior; so that it is doubtful whether we realize the company of our fellow men with greater keenness than these favoured minds are able to contemplate and adore the Unseen Incomprehensible Creator.[1]

III.

Home.

Wherever the Son is and whatever He is doing He is at home with the Father, He is in the Father's house. What did He mean when He spoke of the Father's house?

1. Did He mean the Temple? "My Father's house," He says; these are the very words with which our Lord describes the Temple on another occasion. He rebukes people for turning the Father's house into a den of thieves. Christ's name for the Temple; Christ's name for the great central place of worship of the Jewish people, which had a sacredness that could not belong to any lesser place of worship; Christ's name for the Temple was "my Father's house." This makes the translation "in my Father's house" the more natural thing for Him to say. For the surprise of His parents was to find Him there; and His surprise was that they should have expected Him to be anywhere else: "Wist ye not that I must be in my Father's house?" But, further, we feel that the words are more natural, because they are more child-like. It is hardly the saying of a child that He must be about the concerns or affairs or businesses of His Father. And with changing thought, we have come to think of Jesus, the Divine child, as the perfectly human, perfectly natural child. The simple wonder of His heart seems sufficiently and inimitably expressed in the question, "Wist ye not that I must be in my Father's house?"

[1] J. H. Newman, *Grammar of Assent.*

¶ "Wist ye not?"—He said in His deep distress at the unreasonable behaviour of Joseph and Mary that passover-week. It was the utter and inexcusable unreasonableness of His mother's behaviour to Him that so hurt and so humbled Him. A little consideration would surely have directed her steps straight to the Temple to seek for her Son there, and there alone. And having found Him in the Temple, a very little consideration would surely have restrained her from the precipitate words with which she assailed Him. If she had taken a little time to think of it the utter unreasonableness of her conduct could not but have struck her and made her ashamed of herself. To take the very lowest ground, it was not reasonable to think that the youthful Christ should hurry away from the passover ordinances at the earliest possible moment, and should spend His time gadding about up and down the city. It was but common sense and sound reason, as well as ordinary piety, in Him to do as He had done. "The different magnitude of things is their reason to me," says William Law. And it was because His Father's business was already beginning to be a matter of such immense magnitude to our Lord that He felt so acutely the unreasonableness and the injustice of His mother's treatment of that business and of Him that day. And in all that He teaches us also that if our mere reason were only but sound, if we but gave our wholly sane minds to the different magnitudes of things, that of itself would secure the salvation of our souls. Reason itself, He as good as says here, would never let us wander from the way of our salvation, nor would let us stop short of our Father's house, or ever leave it. Only be reasonable men, He as good as says to us, and you will end in being saved men.[1]

(1) The Temple was the place of *learning*. In the Temple there were some schools in which good and learned men taught the Scriptures to anybody who wished to learn. They sat upon a high seat, and any person, old or young, might enter and join the class sitting on the floor around the teachers. Jesus had found this school. He wanted, like all good children, to know more of the Scriptures. He thought He could not serve God in any better way than by learning from these good old men, who welcomed a young child to their school. And here His parents found Him, "sitting in the midst of the doctors (teachers), both hearing them and asking them questions."

It was in touch with the ancient wisdom, under the schooling

[1] A. Whyte, *The Walk, Conversation, and Character of Jesus Christ our Lord*, 63.

of the authoritative voice of His Church, that He set His thoughts to work for themselves. He indeed asked questions. He set free His inquiring spirit, but He did it facing the fulness of the responsibility, bringing His inquiries into the light of the best learning, laying out His mind at the feet of them who sat in Moses' seat. And not only asking questions, but hearing also. He listened; He heard. Ah! young hearts, aglow with new-found powers, with new-won liberty, is that your case? How often, in the excitement of asking our first questions, have we forgotten that there is any need to hear at all what others are saying! How often, in the sudden discovery of our own independence, we seem to be cut loose from every bond that binds us to others; above all, that binds us to the past! The wonder of thinking for ourselves seems to dismiss, to put out of court, what others have thought. It appears to depose all old authorities. All men before us seem to us to have been dreaming until we arrived on the scene. Now at last the truth is out, and their day is over.[1]

¶ It is observed—so far as inquiry is able to look back at this distance of time—that at his being a schoolboy he was an early questionist, quietly inquisitive, "why this was, and that was not, to be remembered? Why this was granted, and that denied?" This being mixed with a remarkable modesty, and a sweet serene quietness of nature, and with them a quick apprehension of many perplexed parts of learning, imposed then on him as a scholar, made his master and others to believe him to have an inward, blessed, Divine light, and therefore to consider him to be a little wonder. For in that, children were less pregnant, less confident and more malleable, than in this wiser but not better age.[2]

(2) The Temple was the place of *teaching*. Is it improper to say that even then He had something to teach the doctors? He both heard them and asked them questions. There would be no more impropriety in the questionings of a child than there would be in a modern Bible class. It was no doubt unusual for boys of His age to join in the conversation at such times, but it is evident that the doctors were not displeased by His intervention, and were surprised, not by the fact that He addressed them, but by the freshness and force of what He said. We cannot be wrong in thinking that the startling effect of His words would be due,

[1] H. S. Holland, *Pleas and Claims*, 185.
[2] Izaak Walton, *Life of Richard Hooker*.

not to any display of precocious learning, but to the simplicity and directness of His questions and answers.

In after years He taught often in the Temple. Many of the lessons Jesus taught during the period to which He referred when He said to those who came to apprehend Him, "I was daily with you in the temple teaching" (Mark xiv. 49), are probably unrecorded, but there is in the New Testament quite a rich treasury of words that He uttered in the Temple at different periods.[1]

¶ I will say no more of Irving's boyhood. He must have sat, often enough, in Ecclefechan Meeting-house along with me, but I never noticed or knew; and had not indeed heard of him till I went to Annan School, and Irving, perhaps two years before, had left for College. I must bid adieu also, to that poor Temple of my Childhood; to me more sacred at this moment than perhaps the biggest Cathedral then extant could have been. Rude, rustic, bare, no Temple in the world was more so; but there were sacred lambencies, tongues of authentic flame from Heaven, which kindled what was best in one, what has yet not gone out.[2]

¶ All other teachers' words become feeble by age, as their persons become ghostly, wrapped in thickening folds of oblivion; but the progress of the Church consists in absorbing more and more of Christ, in understanding Him better, and becoming more and more moulded by His influence.[3]

(3) And the Temple was a place of *worship*. He called it on one memorable occasion a house of prayer. He spoke in one of His parables of two men who went up to the Temple to pray. And after the Ascension, Peter and John went up to the Temple to pray.

But a Christian place of worship is not a temple, it is a Father's house. That was what our Lord Himself felt about the Temple; He gave it a deeper, richer name—"my Father's house." Nothing is more distinctive of New Testament religion than this phrase, nothing distinguishes New Testament from Old Testament conceptions of religion better than the difference that there is in a Father's house and a Temple. We come to God's house, if we are Christian men, to worship, not an awful and distant God, but One who is near and intimate and loving as a father. Not only

[1] H. Thorne, *Notable Sayings of the Great Teacher*, 63.
[2] Carlyle, *Reminiscences*, ii. 15.
[3] A. Maclaren, *The Holy of Holies*.

is God's house a place of reverence, it is also a place of joy and gladness and shouting.

¶ There is a power in public worship, in the utterance of common sorrows, needs, and hopes, in the prayer that is breathed and the praise that is sung in concert, not with the crowd that fills the sanctuary, but with the innumerable company of all lands and ages who have drunk of the same spring and gone strengthened on their way, which they strangely miss who teach that worship is a worn-out superstition, and that only in the clear light of law can men walk and be blest. While man sins and suffers, while there is blood-tinged sweat upon his brow, while there is weeping in his home and anguish in his heart, that voice can never lose its music which brings forth the comfort and inspiration of the gospel, which tells the sin-tormented spirit the tale of the infinite pity, and bids it lay its sobbing wretchedness to rest on the bosom of infinite love.[1]

2. But the Temple was not His only place of learning, of teaching, or of prayer. He learned the Scriptures in Nazareth; He taught by the shore of the lake; He prayed on the mountain-top. Where does He find symbols whereby to speak of what goes on in the mind and before the face of His Father in heaven? Not in the Temple; not in its rites; not on its altars; not in its holy of holies; He finds them in the world and its lovely-lowly facts; on the roadside, in the field, in the vineyard, in the garden, in the house; in the family, and the commonest of its affairs—the lighting of the lamp, the leavening of the meal, the neighbour's borrowing, the losing of the coin, the straying of the sheep. Even in the unlovely facts also of the world which He turns to holy use, such as the unjust judge, the false steward, the faithless labourers, He ignores the Temple. See how He drives the devils from the souls and bodies of men, as we the wolves from our sheepfolds! how before Him the diseases, scaly and spotted, hurry and flee! The world has for Him no chamber of terror. He walks to the door of the sepulchre, the sealed cellar of His Father's house, and calls forth its four days' dead. He rebukes the mourners, He stays the funeral, and gives back the departed children to their parents' arms. The roughest of its servants do not make Him wince; none of them are so arrogant as to disobey His word; He falls asleep in the midst of the storm that threatens

[1] J. Gregory, *Phillips Brooks*, 18.

to swallow His boat. All His life He was among His Father's things, either in heaven or in the world—not only then when they found Him in the Temple at Jerusalem. He is still among His Father's things, everywhere about in the world, everywhere throughout the wide universe.

Among my kinsfolk and my friends
 I sought for Christ, but found Him not;
The joy of earth in sadness ends,
 The love of hearts is oft forgot.
Each hath his own familiar cares,
And others' burdens lightly bears!

I sought for Christ, but found Him not:
 Sorrowing, O, whither shall I turn?
Lo! Zion's gates, yon hallowed spot,
 Where praise and prayer like incense burn,
Back to Thy temple I'll repair,
Secure, with joy, to find Thee there.

I seek for Christ, but find Him not
 Even there, as yet I hope to find;
This long day's march, life's pilgrim lot,
 Rolls on, and He seems oft behind.
But I shall find whom here I love
In God's Jerusalem above.[1]

[1] C. L. Ford.

Always at Work.

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Always at Work.

And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?—Luke ii. 49 (A.V.).

1. We know how it sometimes happens that a scene which has been for years familiar and beloved suddenly greets us with a new impression. We have caught it from some unexpected angle, or a flying light has shot over it, bringing out some colour or some effect of perspective or of contrast that we never before hit upon. There it is, the old habitual place, which we fancied that we knew by heart, and yet there is a look in it to-day which we had never suspected, which we had always missed. A touch of beauty, a flash of significance, has given it a new consecration. The novelty of the effect is heightened by the very fact that it is brought out of material so intimately known.

Now, is not this often the case with the Four Gospels? Those wonderful books—how well we seem to know them! From our earliest memories the familiar rhythms have sung "the old, old story" in our ears. We turn the pages only to pass the eye along its habitual and anticipated sequences. And then, by a sudden stroke now and again, a fresh gleam of light falls, and some fragment of the gospel story starts into swift and radiant prominence. We had read that bit a thousand times before, yet it lay unmarked; pleasant, indeed, and helpful, one perhaps among many that we liked, yet with no special note. But to-day it stands out as if alone. A peculiar force lies about it. A splendid meaning breaks from it. How is it we can have passed it over so easily? How is it we ever missed its vivid interest?

Some such prominence has fallen in our day on the scene recorded by St. Luke to which the text refers. So strangely alone it is, this tale of the boyhood of Jesus, plucked out of the heart of that silence which broods round the long hours of the Lord's growth at Nazareth. Ah, how we pine to penetrate within

that shrouding silence—the silence during which the blessed Plant sprang up out of the dry ground. Would that we might follow the unrecorded process in the mystery of which He passed from the unconscious impotence of the Babe, passive in the manger, swathed in swaddling-clothes, to that full, ripe, conscious manhood of His ministry—complete, self-mastered, sure-footed; clear in aim, in purpose, in decision; calm, measured, deliberate, and determined. Between the two moments lies the whole story of the upward growth.

2. If the veil of silence has fallen on so much that we cannot but desire to look into, with what an outbreak of relief do we fasten on this solitary story which the diligence of St. Luke has been guided to rescue out of all the hidden mystery of growth, for our loving attention! Here he has been allowed to bring before us, not merely the broad or secret process by which His human nature won its advances, but a most signal moment of its increase, when it arrived at a new level, as it were, at a bound.

Such a moment is never forgotten, the moment at which the boy ceases to see through the eyes of others, ceases to speak, to think, as others do about him; when he sees with his own eyes, and faces his own world, and seeks for his own interpretation of it. Such moments, when they come, are full of a great awe; we are rapt into a solitude of our own, in which we forget our earlier interests, which have become as a very little thing. We are absorbed in the passion of a spiritual discovery; we are caught up, young though we be, into the solemnity of those swift and sudden intuitions which have the

> Power to make
> Our noisy years seem moments in the being
> Of the eternal Silence.

Many a man or woman can recall echoes of such times. Perhaps, long after we have forgotten them, we drop upon some fervid or grave resolution, written with our unformed hand, in a youthful diary, the record of some such momentous awakening. We smile as our eyes fall on that record, yet smile with a sigh of sad regret that, with all wiser intelligence, we have not retained the intense and earnest seriousness which makes sacred that old scrawl.

3. The words of our text, then, are the only words recovered from the childhood of Jesus. All the precious memory that Mary kept in her heart appears to have died with her.

> She told it not; or something sealed
> The lips of that evangelist.

Legends survive, enough; offspring of crude if devout imaginations, and so obviously spurious that there has never been any serious attempt to include them in sacred writ. In thirty years, one saying, and one only, survives. These are the first recorded words of Jesus, and every syllable is precious. The poet Wordsworth says that the child is father of the man; and surely in these words of Jesus we get a hint of all that the man Jesus is ever to become. As in a mountain lake one sees reflected the mountains and the forests and the procession of the clouds, so in this single sentence of Jesus is mirrored the entire New Testament land and sky.

4. What do these words signify? They claim Sonship—"my Father"; they claim also the necessity of obeying the demands of Sonship—"I must"; and they claim that what the Father demands of the Son is Service—"about my Father's business." So we have—

I. Sonship.
II. Surrender.
III. Service.

I.

Sonship.

"My Father."

1. In His first words, Jesus claims Divine Paternity, and for Himself Divine Sonship. When His mother said "Thy father and I have sought thee," she meant Joseph, but when Jesus said "my Father's business," He did not mean Joseph, for He was not about Joseph's business when in the Temple, questioning, and being questioned by the doctors. We can put no other fair interpretation on the phrase "my Father" than that which makes

it refer to God, His Divine Father. It was His business that He was about when in The temple, not Joseph's.

"My Father." This was Jesus' name for God. When He spoke to God He always called Him "Father." When He was successful in His work, He said, "Father, I thank thee." When He was overcome with grief, He cried, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass." When He pleaded for His disciples, He said, "Father, keep through thine own name these whom thou hast given me." On the cross He prayed, "Father, forgive them," and with His last breath He said, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." This is the word He wanted all men to use.

The first use of the name "Father" by Jesus was to name God, not a man. Our souls first know an earthly father, then climb up as by a beautiful ladder of the soul to the idea of a heavenly Father. Jesus knew first the Father above. He lived under Him, carried Him in the sweetest centre of His being, had His will shaped by Him, and was inspired by hope and love and submission to Him. Little children grow up to call the man in their house, who gave them their life and provides that life with home and food, "father," "my father." But Jesus grew up to think of God as all this. From the first He was inspired by the thoughts of the strength and the love of God, His Father, and was a loyal child of the will of God.

¶ I was telling her how sternly children were brought up fifty or sixty years ago; how they bowed to their father's empty chair, stood when he entered the room, did not dare speak unless they were spoken to, and always called him "sir." "Did they never say 'father'? Did they not say it on Sundays for a treat?" A little while later, after profound reflection, she asked—"God is very old; does Jesus call Him Father?" "Yes, dear; He always called Him Father." It was only earthly fathers after all who did not suffer their babes to come to them.[1]

2. Christ's first saying was not a moral precept, but a solemn declaration concerning His relation to God. He breaks forth on the world at the age of twelve, and claims to be the Son of the Eternal Father. Was it now that the consciousness of this great fact dawned upon Him, or was it present with Him during the whole of His early childhood in Nazareth? The confident calm-

[1] W. Canton, *W. V.: Her Book*, 122.

ness with which He utters it suggests that He was previously conscious of the relationship. As a Jewish boy, brought up in a devout religious home, He must have been early instructed in the Law and the Prophets. Before He was born, His mother was visited by an angel, who communicated to her a Divine message of marvellous significance. "Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus." Would not His mother tell Him, before He reached the age of twelve, of this angelic visit and of the mysterious message? Could she, as a fond mother, well withhold it? While studying the Law and the Prophets, during the early years of childhood in Nazareth, His eye may have fallen on Isaiah's significant passage, "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." Would He not at once interpret the meaning and, applying it to Himself, understand that He was the Immanuel who was to be born of a virgin? Had He read, or had there been read to Him, in the secluded home of Nazareth, the passage in Deut. xviii. 18, 19, "I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him"? Had He a glimpse of Himself when the passage was read? In the Temple, what portions of the Hebrew Scriptures were read in the service? Was it Isaiah liii., or Psalm ii., or Psalm xxii., or Psalm lxxii., or Psalm cx.? Were these included in the seven days' service, or in the discussion among the doctors? Did the child of twelve years hear any inward voice, saying, I am He of whom Psalmists and Prophets speak? Was the grandeur of His mission opening out to Him? Was the spirit of His mission possessing Him? Did He now say to Himself, in the mysterious depth of His own consciousness, "For this cause came I unto this hour," "and how am I straitened until it be accomplished"? When now He made the great announcement to His mother, that God is His Father and that He is the Son of God, did He not set His seal to the angel's mysterious words, "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest"?

We are not warranted in affirming that the child meant all that the man afterwards meant by the claim to be the Son of God; nor are we any more warranted in denying that He did.

We know too little about the mysteries of His growth to venture on definite statements of either kind. Our sounding lines are not long enough to touch bottom in this great word from the lips of a boy of twelve; but this is clear, that as He grew into self-consciousness, there came with it the growing consciousness of His Sonship to His Father in Heaven.

3. Jesus never speaks of His holding the same relationship as His disciples to God the Father. He never speaks to His disciples of "our God," or of "our Father," but of "your Father," and "my Father"; of "your God," and "my God"; implying that His relationship as Son is of a higher, diviner order than the relationship of the disciples as children of God. You may reply, that in the Lord's Prayer He says "Our Father." Yes, but He had said before, "When ye pray, say, Our Father." He puts the words into the mouths of His disciples, and does not intimate that He uses them Himself when He prays, or that He uses them conjointly with His disciples. Although known as the Lord's Prayer, it is a prayer which He could not offer. It contains a petition for forgiveness of sins, which only sinners could offer; and He, being sinless, could not join in the petition.

4. But Jesus said to the disciples "When ye pray, say, Father." For to us also there is a better life than the life of nature, and the Fatherhood into which Christ introduces us means that through faith in Him, and the entrance into our spirits of the Spirit of adoption, we receive a life derived from, and kindred with, the life of the Giver, and that we are bound not only to Him by the cords of love, but also to our parents by the ties of family affection. Sonship is the deepest thought about the Christian life. It was an entirely new thought when Jesus spoke to His disciples of their Father in heaven. It was a thrilling novelty when Paul bade servile worshippers realize that they were no longer slaves, but sons, and, as such, heirs of God. It was the rapture of pointing to a new star flaming out, as it were, that swelled in John's exclamation: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God."

"When ye pray, say, Father." When you are worried, remember that God is your Father. When you ask God for blessings, remember how willing parents are to give good things to their children. God is both willing and able to give us every

good thing, for everything belongs to God. And because everything belongs to God, Jesus treated everything with reverence. He would not allow men to swear by heaven or the earth or Jerusalem or their own head, for all these belonged to His Heavenly Father. He drove the traders from the Temple because they were desecrating the Temple of His Father. He cheered the hearts of His disciples by reminding them that the house of many mansions belongs to the Heavenly Father. All people were dear to Jesus because all of them were the children of God. Beggars and lepers and blind men and bad men, the most loathsome and forsaken of men were dear to His heart because they belonged to His Father in Heaven. To be worthy of His Father was His constant ambition and unfailing delight. "My meat," He said, "is to do his will and to finish his work."

¶ The idea that God is a loving, righteous Father, who has created me to be His child, capable of knowing Him and learning to sympathize with Him in love and goodness, and so to be partaker of His blessedness, and who is educating me for this inwardly and outwardly at every moment, is an idea which commends itself to me as light; and I find also that practically it is fruitful and good. There is no proof of this, except in our own human consciousness; but, also, there is no real proof against it, and I am compelled to regard it as eternal truth.[1]

¶ God is a kind Father. He sets us all in the places where He wishes us to be employed; and that employment is truly "our Father's business." He chooses work for every creature which will be delightful to them, if they do it simply and humbly. He gives us always strength enough, and sense enough, for what He wants us to do; if we either tire ourselves or puzzle ourselves, it is our own fault. And we may always be sure, whatever we are doing, that we cannot be pleasing Him if we are not happy ourselves.[2]

II.

Surrender.

"I must."

1. All through Christ's life there runs, and occasionally comes into utterance, the sense of a Divine necessity laid upon Him;

[1] *Letters of Thomas Erskine of Linlathen*, ii. 256.
[2] Ruskin, *Ethics of the Dust* (*Works*, xvii. 290).

and here is the beginning, the very first time that the word occurs on His lips, "I must."

Mark that great word "must." It was one of Jesus' earliest words, and He used it to the end. He was not ashamed to say that there were some things which He was obliged to do. Let no boy ever hesitate to say "I must." Many a man's life has been wrecked because he never learned, when a boy, to speak the words "I must." Jesus early learned the lesson, and so at thirty He could say, "I must preach the gospel." When men stood amazed at His tireless industry He said, "I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day."

This great word "must" is used about thirty times in the New Testament in relation to the mission of Christ, His work, His sufferings, His death, His resurrection, His ascension, His mediatorial sovereignty, and His final victory over sin and Satan, and the word proceeds mostly from the lips of Christ Himself; in a few instances, it also proceeds from the sacred writers themselves; but even then, they seem only to echo the word which He had so solemnly used, and which, by frequent repetition, He had deeply impressed on their memory. For example take the following—He showed "unto his disciples how that he must go into Jerusalem, and suffer many things"; "the scripture must be fulfilled"; "the Son of man must suffer many things"; "I must preach the kingdom of God"; "I must walk to-day, and to-morrow, and the day following"; "But first must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation"; "the passover must be killed"; "this that is written must yet be accomplished in me, And he was reckoned among the transgressors"; "the Son of man must be delivered"; "all things must be fulfilled"; "even so must the Son of man be lifted up"; "he must rise again"; "he must reign." Sometimes, under the pressure of this awful "must," although the word itself is not used, He yet employs phrases which are equivalent, and which indicate that He is under solemn necessity. "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished." The word "must" is not there, but the meaning of it is, and the solemn pressure of it is felt. "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour; but for this cause came I unto this hour." Again the word "must" is not in this passage,

but we hear the echo of it, feel the pressure of it, and the meaning of it is significantly emphasized.

2. There is as Divine and as real a necessity shaping our lives, because it lies upon and moulds our wills, if we have the child's heart, and stand in the child's position. In Jesus Christ the "must" was not an external one, but He "must be about His Father's business" because His whole inclination and will was submitted to the Father's authority. And that is what will make any life sweet, calm, noble. "The love of Christ constraineth us." There is a necessity which presses upon men like iron fetters; there is a necessity which wells up within a man a fountain of life, and does not so much drive as sweetly incline the will, so that it is impossible for him to be other than a loving, obedient child.

¶ Some very little children sometimes use the word "must" very naughtily. There is an old saying, you know, "Must is for the king and not for his people." But "must" is sometimes a very nice little word. "I must do." Why did Jesus say that? "Oh, I so love My Father that I cannot help it. My love to My Father compels Me to do it." "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"[1]

3. The words "I must" on the lips of Jesus suggest that the higher freedom implies the higher necessity. If ever any man was free that man was Jesus. He, indeed, achieved that moral and spiritual freedom after which we toil in vain. The bondage of the world, the flesh and the devil was a bondage from which He was absolutely and utterly emancipated. He at least was no slave to the opinion of society, or merely human authorities. In Herod He saw no king, but only a sinful man whose soul was in peril. In Caiaphas He saw no priest but only a fallible mortal, needing to be enlightened by the Spirit of God. He was free from all unworthy motives and inferior ambitions. He was free from the hesitation and timidities inspired by doubt. He was the free child of truth, righteousness, love. And He, the mighty Conqueror and Master of all wrong and error, was so because He was the perfect Servant of truth and right. The higher freedom was the higher necessity.

[1] J. Vaughan, *Children's Sermons*, 150.

The law of His childhood was the law of His manhood. Just as one of your little ones floating a walnut-shell upon a bowl of water calls into operation all, or nearly all, the laws that operate when an ocean-liner is launched, so within the utterance of this child-spirit of Jesus there are contained those majestic spiritual revelations which go far to compose the gospel. He called men to love God more perfectly, that they might be subdued more completely to the obedience of God. He knew that when He taught them to say "Our Father," He taught them to say "We must obey God rather than man." Surrender was latent in sonship.

¶ Manhood begins when we have in any way made truce with Necessity; begins even when we have surrendered to Necessity, as the most part only do; but begins joyfully and hopefully only when we have reconciled ourselves to Necessity; and thus, in reality, triumphed over it, and felt that in Necessity we are free.[1]

III.

Service.

"My Father's business."

1. When only twelve Jesus had grasped the great idea that life must be lived for a purpose. There is business to do and the business belongs to God. In the Temple Jesus forgot all about Himself. Some boys study because they are compelled to, or because they want to make a show, or because they expect to use their education in making money later on; but Jesus listened to His teachers and pondered the lessons which they set Him in order to advance the glory of His Father. All kinds of work take on new lustre when we think of it as being given to us by our Father. Men sometimes say, "my business," "my studies," "my plans," forgetting that God has anything to do with them. Everything we do, if we do it rightly, is our Father's business. It is ours and it is also His. Our life is ours and His, so also is our work. We are interested in our tasks, and so is He. We bend over our studies, and so does He. Everything that touches us also touches Him; and that boys and girls should obey their parents and pay

[1] Carlyle, "Essay on Burns" (*Miscellanies*, ii. 3).

attention to their teachers is not only their business, it is also the business of the Heavenly Father.

¶ Many Christians tell me that they have no vocation to service; that they do not know what to do; that they would be glad to serve God, if only they knew how and where! These are they who were not on the alert, when first they knew the Lord, to set themselves at once about their Father's business; or who have fallen from their first love and zeal; or have separated service from the consciousness of salvation; and I fear, in many cases, with the abandonment or the neglect of service, have lost the blessed consciousness of sonship. I am more and more satisfied, as I come to know myself and my surroundings better, and those of other Christians as well, that we do not so much need to make opportunities as to embrace them when they are presented to us. The majority of life's failures, especially in Christian life, grow out of not promptly embracing opportunities for service. Shakespeare tells us that "There is a tide which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune." It is equally true that there are spiritual instincts and promptings which, if yielded to, lead on to most blessed and useful Christian life; but which, if neglected, leave the Christian to comparative shipwreck.[1]

¶ In matters of business take this as a maxim, that it is not enough to give things their beginning, direction, or impulse; we must also follow them up and never slacken our efforts until they are brought to a conclusion.[2]

I thought of life, the outer and the inner,
As I was walking by the sea,
How vague, unshapen this, and that, though thinner,
Yet hard and clear in its rigidity.
Then took I up the fragment of a shell,
And saw its accurate loveliness,
And searched its filmy lines, its pearly cell,
And all that keen contention to express
A finite thought. And then I recognized
God's working in the shell from root to rim,
And said—"He works till He has realized—
Oh Heaven! if I could only work like Him!"[3]

2. "My Father's business." What is this business? In one word, it is redemption, to bring lost humanity into a salvable

[1] G. F. Pentecost, *Sermons*, 103.
[2] *Counsels and Reflections of F. Guicciardini.*
[3] T. E. Brown, *Old John and other Poems*, 128.

condition; to provide for the restoration of purity, blessedness and immortality, to men who have forfeited all by transgression; to save from sin, its power, pollution, and penalties, all who apply to God for mercy. Or, in other words, to establish in this fallen world a kingdom of grace and salvation, whose gates shall be thrown wide open, and into which all the alienated race of man may enter, on condition of renouncing for ever their allegiance to the Evil One, and consecrating themselves loyally to their Redeeming King.

¶ John Vassar once spoke to a lady about her soul, and the lady told her husband of what he had said. "I should have told him," said her husband, "to mind his own business." "If you had been there," said the lady, "you would have thought it was his business."[1]

(1) One part of that redemption which was the business of Christ was to offer a perfect *example*. When He sums up His own life, it is at one time, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do"; "my meat is to do the will of him that sent me": at another it is, "I am among you as he that serveth"—as the Servant of men; "the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." And we see why the two go together. The true child shares the true parent's thoughts and purposes, and feels as he feels. And so the child of God, because he knows that He is the Father of His human creatures, and that He is love, and means nothing but love for them, must himself begin to share that love, that care, begin to feel the zeal to help, the wish to serve.

¶ God had written divers books of example in the lives of the saints. One man was noted for one virtue, and another for another. At last, God determined that He would gather all His works into one volume, and give a condensation of all virtues in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now He determined to unite all the parts into one, to string all the pearls on one necklace, and to make them all apparent around the neck of one single person. The sculptor finds here a leg from some eminent master, and there a hand from another mighty sculptor. Here he finds an eye, and there a head full of majesty. He saith, within himself, "I will compound these glories, I will put them all together; then it shall be the model man. I will make the

[1] H. Thorne, *Notable Sayings of the Great Teacher*, 65.

statue *par excellence*, which shall stand first in beauty, and shall be noted ever afterwards as the model of manhood." So said God, "There is Job—he hath patience; there is Moses—he hath meekness; there are those mighty ones who all have eminent virtues. I will take these, I will put them into one; and the man Christ Jesus shall be the perfect model of future imitation." Now, I say that all Christ's life He was endeavouring to do His Father's business in this matter.[1]

¶ It seems as if nothing could be more impossible than to follow our Lord's example. He was God, and we are but weak and sinful men. How can we follow the Divine example in our small, petty life? How can we follow the Divine example when there is within us so much that is selfish, so much that is hard, so much that is false, and so much that is ungenerous? How can we follow His example? And yet He Himself has told us that even to give a cup of cold water is a thing that He will notice, if it is done in His spirit. In His spirit; and that spirit ought to animate all the actions of every-day life. No doubt it is here, here particularly, that it seems as if our power to obey His precepts must break down. To follow His example—how can it be done? But the Lord Himself, when He calls us to follow His example, knows our weakness and knows what is the nature of the task that is put upon us; He enters into all the folly and all the blindness and all the pains and all the temptations that mark our characters and lower our lives; He enters into it all. Without sin Himself, He nevertheless shared all the troubles of human life, and as if to encourage us these strange and awful words have been written by His direction, that He "learned obedience by the things which he suffered." He learned obedience because He passed through all that was needed to make obedience perfect. He learned not to obey; but He learned what to obey really meant. His humanity had to pass through what our humanity passes through. He obeyed—He had no need to learn that—but He learned what was the struggle, what was the trouble, that perpetually impeded obedience. He learned to feel it, and still He retains that humanity which felt it, and He sympathizes with every difficulty that besets our endeavours to please Him. He sympathizes, for He knows it all; He sympathizes because He has passed through it all. And if we are to abide in Him, we, too, must learn obedience, not only in the sense in which He learned it; we must not only learn what it is to obey, but we must learn to obey. And the Lord knows us through and through; He sees whether we are

[1] C. H. Spurgeon.

following His example, or not, and His loving mercy is with us all the time.[1]

(2) Another part was to offer Himself a *sacrifice.* Twenty-one years from this Passover, He Himself must be the slain Lamb, His must be the blood shed. These shadowy typical ceremonials will then be abolished, and will cease for ever; for He Himself will become the one Priest, the one Sacrifice, the one Mediator at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavenly sanctuary. It is said that He increased in wisdom. During these seven days of the Passover, He must have added immensely to His store of knowledge concerning the work He had to do, and the sacrifice He had to make as the world's Redeemer. That Passover was an object-lesson, whose typical meaning He would not fail to understand and to apply.

¶ It was His Father's business made Him sweat great drops of blood; His Father's business ploughed His back with many gory furrows; His Father's business pricked His temple with the thorny crown; His Father's business made Him mocked and spit upon; His Father's business made Him go about bearing His cross; His Father's business made Him despise the shame when, naked, He hung upon the tree; His Father's business made Him yield Himself to death, though He needed not to die if so He had not pleased; His Father's business made Him tread the gloomy shades of Gehenna, and descend into the abodes of death; His Father's business made Him preach to the spirits in prison; and His Father's business took Him up to heaven, where He sitteth on the right hand of God, doing His Father's business still![2]

3. This is the necessity that lies upon every one of the sons of God. In other words, the law of life, as illustrated by the example of our Lord and Master, and iterated and reiterated by all the lessons of human experience, is the law of Divine obedience through human service. The love of God is best shown in the love of men. Those souls are the most reverent, and most completely fulfil the Divine will, that yield the most readily and cheerfully to the pressure of human need.

(1) This business may not be regarded as apart from the ordinary, daily duties of life. What one is called upon to perform day by day, however ordinary and monotonous, may lie directly

[1] Archbishop Temple. [2] C. H. Spurgeon.

in the line of Divine appointment. It is hardly fair to assume that Joseph and Mary were not about their Father's business. Nor is there any reason for supposing that Jesus meant to imply that they were not, although asserting for Himself obedience to the higher mandate. By attending simply and unostentatiously to the chosen or appointed task, we may find the angels of God coming forth to meet us as they met Jacob of old on his way from Syria to Palestine.

¶ It is possible that some of you may be secretly wishing that you could spend all your days in public prayer, in the hallowed engagements of the sanctuary, in preaching the gospel or in teaching the young; let me say to you that there is not an errand-boy in the streets of London who cannot be turning his work into the business of God; all business may be made our Father's, by doing it in our Father's spirit, and for our Father's glory. Do not yield yourselves to the fallacy that religion is separate and distinct from all the common engagements of life. The doorkeeper in the poorest commercial establishment in this city may be doing his Father's business quite as much as the elders and angels that are around the throne. Everything depends upon your spirit. You may make the commonest duty uncommon by coming to it in a sanctified and heavenly spirit.[1]

(2) The business of the Father may be performed in the treatment we give to current questions. Every age has its problems. The heart of the Roman Empire in the time of Tiberius and Nero was stirred by great questions, as is shown by the interrogatories of Pilate and Felix and Herod Agrippa. Our own age is no exception in this respect to the ages that have preceded it. Indeed, it would almost seem as if Christianity, in its fearless challenge of every phase of human thought and of every variety of organized life, had created problems which are, and must be for ever, almost the despair of human wisdom and effort. In whatever direction we turn the light of our faith, we seem not only to expose to observation the deep struggles of the individual soul over the mysteries of being, but to bring into view those actions, habits, institutions and relations of men which must be reformed before the Kingdom of God shall come. We cannot shut our eyes to these things; we cannot push them aside as of no consequence; we cannot even fold our arms in indifference

[1] Joseph Parker.

before them. They are here; they demand consideration, and must and will have some intelligent treatment from us.

How to get the idle rich to abandon their idleness and help to carry some of the burdens of those who are now too heavy laden; how to equalize to some extent the favours of fortune and, while discouraging an over-accumulation of riches in a few hands, take away at least some of the sharper stings of poverty; how to avert the arrows of misfortune from those who are exposed to the pitiless assault of circumstances which they have done nothing to create and which they are powerless of themselves to change; how to lighten the work of those who have too much of it and give work to those who, without employment, would yet be glad to earn an honest wage; in short, how to exalt the lowly and bring down the proud, and make the pathway of men blossom with comfort and kindliness and goodwill, and thus give us a foretaste of heavenly peace; these are some of the new tasks of this new time. Those who love their fellow-men are summoned to these undertakings. Those who have leisure and intelligence are without excuse if they let the summons go unheeded. The voice that calls is the voice of God, and they who obey the call may be sure that they are about their Father's business.

¶ Fawcett's great principle (which, of course, he shared in general with Mill) was one which would only be disputed in general terms by an Egyptian anchorite or an Indian faquir—Live in camel's-hair raiment, and you may fairly denounce the rich and regard poverty as a blessing. Fawcett, who preferred broadcloth, held that the master evil of the day was the crushing poverty of great masses of the population. To make men better, you must make them richer—that is, less abjectly poor, less stunted and shackled by the ceaseless pressure of hard, material necessities. Religious, moral, and intellectual reforms are urgently needed, but they cannot become fruitful unless the soil be prepared. Apply all your elevating influences, but also drive the wolf from the door or they will never have fair play. Men ought to desire more, or rather ought to have further-reaching desires. They should be more prudent and thoughtful—oftener at the savings-bank and less often at the public-house. That was the pith of Fawcett's teaching as an economist, and few who call themselves Christians will admit that it is condemned by Christianity.[1]

[1] Leslie Stephen, *Life of Henry Fawcett*, 140.

(3) But, however we act and wherever we go, we must not lose sight of the fact that we are all the time in the presence of the living God. We may be dwelling in a world of sense, but we are also in a world of spirit. This universe is God's universe. His power is manifest in it, and His spirit pervades it. We cannot go where He is not. That is the thought which is given to sober us and to impart steadiness to all our aims. Before it all considerations of the temporal vanish. We are no longer mere denizens of this mortal world. We are spiritual beings, living in a spiritual world, endowed with spiritual attributes, having an immortal destiny, and are indeed the children of the Highest.

¶ When the knowledge of our immortality dawns upon us, how little then our hearts are set upon the pleasant garniture of life, and the riches which it then becomes almost a delight to resign! Our mind is fixed no longer on sweet colours and sounds, because it knows that it is passing through them, and that they are but symbols of the fulness and unity that shall be. Those whom we love are no longer merely those with whom we use delight, and from whom we gather joy, but souls bound to us for ever by a stainless bond, which no lapse of time can hurt or break. And therefore we make haste to cast out of our life all sick and jarring elements, and to agree swiftly while we are in the way together.

The thought of sweet things that must fade is no longer a mere poignant sentiment, but a sign of renewal and freedom. Memories are no longer mere hopeless phantoms, but as the stones of the desolate place out of which the wayfarer piles his pillow. We do not lose the sense that things belong to us, but instead of their being things which we hoard for a little and then reluctantly and pathetically resign, they are ours for ever. The old days of kindness and regret, when we grasped at what seemed so solid, but lapsed like the snow-crystal while we held our breath, are no longer times to muse ruefully over and to forget if we can, but miry ways which led us, how blindly and dully, to the house of life itself; and instead of viewing pain and death as cruel gradations of decay, through which we fall into silence, we know them to be the last high steps of the ascent from which the view of life itself, with all its wide plains and woods, its homesteads and towns, will break upon our delighted eyes.

It may be said, "Can we live life on this level of hope and expectation?" No, we cannot all in a moment. But we can return again and again, in times of grief and pain, to contemplate

the truth, and drink fresh draughts of comfort and healing. The one thing that we must determine is not to acquiesce in being entangled in the earthly things that catch and wind, like the grasses and branches of the brake, about our climbing feet. Not to make terms with mortal and material things, not to abide in them, that is our business here and now. To take life as we find it, but never to forget that it is neither the end or the goal, that it is at once the problem and the solution.[1]

Guest from a holier world,
Oh, tell me where the peaceful valleys lie!
Down in the ark of life, when thou shalt fly,
Where will thy wings be furled?

Where is thy native nest?
Where the green pastures that the blessed roam?
Impatient dweller in thy clay-built home,
Where is thy heavenly rest?

On some immortal shore,
Some realm away from earth and time, I know;
A land of bloom, where living waters flow,
And grief comes nevermore.

Faith turns my eyes above;
Day fills with floods of light the boundless skies
Night watches calmly with her starry eyes
All tremulous with love.

And, as entranced I gaze,
Sweet music floats to me from distant lyres:
I see a temple, round whose golden spires
Unearthly glory plays!

Beyond those azure deeps
I fix thy home,—a mansion kept for thee
Within the Father's house, whose noiseless key
Kind Death, the warder, keeps![2]

[1] A. C. Benson, *Thy Rod and Thy Staff*, 72.
[2] Albert Laighton.

The Baptism of Jesus.

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The Baptism of Jesus.

Now it came to pass, when all the people were baptized, that, Jesus also having been baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily form, as a dove, upon him, and a voice came out of heaven, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.—Luke iii. 21, 22.

1. The Baptism of our Lord was the first event of His public life as the Christ; and on this account alone it would have a peculiar significance and importance. Previously to this time He had lain hid in Galilee, in silent and secret preparation for His public work, dwelling beneath the roof of His earthly parents, and subject to them, growing year by year in wisdom and in stature, and in favour with God and man. What were His occupations and pursuits; how His soul within Him was exercised and disciplined in the prospect of the public duties assigned to Him as Mediator; in what way the one thought of glorifying His Father by "obedience unto death" for His people was ever before His mind, waxing in greatness and awfulness as it was longer and more fully contemplated; how the coming events of His temptation and agony and Cross filled His holy human heart with longing and wonder and fear as the time drew on and they looked the nearer, we have not anywhere in Scripture been clearly informed. The thirty years that elapsed between His birth and His "showing unto Israel" are for us little else than a mysterious blank. We can do no more than conjecture how His human understanding, by the aid of the Old Testament Scriptures, which spoke of Him in type and prophecy and promise, grew in the knowledge of the great work given Him to do; and how His human feelings of faith and love, and submission to His Father, by acts of converse with God in private, were disciplined and strengthened to enter upon it. It is but a glimpse that we get of the extent to which the Child Jesus had, during His early years, perfected Himself in the Word of His God, when we see

Him, at twelve years of age, sitting among the Jewish Doctors in the Temple, the Teacher rather than the taught; and we can only guess by way of inference how large a portion of His private hours in youth was spent in secret communion with His Father, when we read of how the habit had grown in mature age into the spending of whole nights alone in prayer to God.

But although comparative darkness has been allowed to settle down upon the history of the earthly life of Christ before He grew to manhood, yet we can hardly err in believing that by means of these two things—namely, God speaking to His human soul in the written Word, and His human soul holding converse with God in prayer—He was educated for the work in public which lay before Him; and that, although we may know but little of the character or the successive steps of it, yet there was a great work of preparation going on in those early years, of which no record is found in Scripture. And when this mysterious preparation was at an end—when the hidden discipline of His early years had made perfect the Son of God for His destined enterprise—what was the event which terminated His secret and inaugurated His public career; which closed up the history of Jesus as a private man, and proclaimed the opening of His official life as the Messiah, the sent of God? We have the narrative of that event in the passage before us.

2. The first meeting of Jesus and John is a unique scene. They were of nearly the same age; they were related according to the flesh; they were both men of prophetic endowment, sent to produce in their native country a religious reformation. Yet, in spite of these and other points of resemblance, there could not have been two characters more absolutely contrasted. Jesus marked the contrast in the broadest way when He subsequently said, "John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine; and ye say, He hath a devil. The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold, a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners!" John was the child of the desert, courting solitude and avoiding human society; Jesus followed a homely trade, appeared at marriages and feasts, was a friend of women and children, and was as much at home in the busy city as on the mountain top. John called the

multitude out to the desert to hear him and did not condescend to visit the haunts of men; Jesus went to sinners where He could find them, considering it His duty to seek as well as to save that which was lost. John had a seared look; he was a man who, after severe struggles, had obtained the mastery of himself and was holding down a coarse nature by main force; Jesus, on the contrary, was always innocent and spontaneous, genial and serene. John, in short, was the Old Testament personified, Jesus the embodiment of the New; and in John's shrinking from baptizing Jesus, the spirit of the Old Testament—the spirit of law, wrath and austerity—was doing homage to the spirit of the New Testament—the spirit of freedom and of love.

A voice by Jordan's shore!
 A summons stern and clear;—
Reform! be just! and sin no more!
 God's judgment draweth near!

A voice by Galilee,
 A holier voice I hear;—
Love God! thy neighbour love! for see,
 God's mercy draweth near!

O voice of Duty! still
 Speak forth; I hear with awe;
In thee I own the sovereign will,
 Obey the sovereign law.

Thou higher voice of Love,
 Yet speak Thy word in me;
Through duty let me upward move
 To Thy pure liberty![1]

3. The application by Jesus for baptism perplexed John; and it is a perplexity even to this day. It is not, indeed, entirely without parallel in the life of Christ; for His circumcision, which took place when He was eight days old, raises the same difficulty. The difficulty is that He should have participated in an ordinance which symbolized the removal of sin. But in this case it is more urgent, because He made the application Himself.

Only two explanations seem really to touch the quick. The

[1] Samuel Longfellow.

one is that John's baptism had a positive as well as a negative side. It was not only the baptism of repentance, but a rite of dedication. It was a renewal of the national covenant, the inauguration of a new era, the gateway of the Kingdom of God. Now, although Jesus had no part in the sin from which baptism cleansed, He had part in this positive enthusiasm; He was the very Person to lead the way into the new era. The other explanation, which may very easily be combined with this one, is that He received baptism as a representative Person. Although sinless Himself, He was a member of a sinful nation, of whose sin He was keenly conscious—more so than any other whom John baptized—and He went along with the rest of the nation in making confession. In short, He was in this act rehearsing beforehand the great act of His death, when He bore in His own body on the tree the sins of the world.

¶ Tintoret has thrown into his picture of the Baptism of Christ his utmost strength; and it becomes noble in his hands by his most singularly imaginative expression, not only of the immediate fact, but of the whole train of thought of which it is suggestive; and by his considering the Baptism not only as the submission of Christ to the fulfilment of all righteousness, but as the opening of the earthly struggle with the prince of the powers of the air, which instantly beginning in the temptation, ended only on the Cross. The river flows fiercely under the shadow of a great rock. From its opposite shore, thickets of close gloomy foliage rise against the rolling chasm of heaven, through which breaks the brightness of the descending Spirit. Across these, dividing them asunder, is stretched a horizontal floor of flaky cloud, on which stand the hosts of heaven. Christ kneels upon the water, and does not sink; the figure of St. John is indistinct, but close beside his raised right arm there is a spectre in the black shade; the Fiend, harpy-shaped, hardly seen, glares down upon Christ with eyes of fire, waiting his time. Beneath this figure there comes out of the mist a dark hand, the arm unseen, extended to a net in the river, the spars of which are in the shape of a cross. Behind this the roots and under stems of the trees are cut away by the cloud, and beneath it, and through them, is seen a vision of wild, melancholy, boundless light, the sweep of the desert; and the figure of Christ is seen therein alone, with His arms lifted as in supplication or ecstasy, borne of the Spirit into the Wilderness to be tempted of the Devil.[1]

[1] Ruskin, *Modern Painters* (*Works*, iv. 268).

I.

The Circumstances of the Baptism.

Before we attempt to enter into the meaning of the Baptism of Jesus, whether for Himself or for us, it will be well to bring before our minds the events that took place on the occasion of it, as they are reported by St. Luke. These events are: (1) the Prayer, (2) the Opening of the Heavens, (3) the Descent of the Spirit, and (4) the Voice.

i. The Prayer.

There is one peculiarity about the life of our Lord Jesus Christ which everybody must have noticed who has carefully read the four Gospels, namely, that He was a man of much prayer. He was mighty as a preacher; for even the officers who were sent to arrest Him said, "Never man spake like this man." But He appears to have been even mightier in prayer, if such a thing could be possible. We do not read that His disciples ever asked Him to teach them to preach, but we are told that, "as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray." He had no doubt been praying with such wonderful fervour that His disciples realized that He was a master of the holy art of prayer, and they therefore desired to learn the secret for themselves. The whole life of our Lord Jesus Christ was one of prayer. Though we are often told about His praying, we feel that we scarcely need to be informed of it, for we know that He must have been a man of prayer. His acts are the acts of a prayerful man; His words speak to us like the words of one whose heart was constantly lifted up in prayer to His Father. You could not imagine that He would have breathed out such blessings upon men if He had not first breathed in the atmosphere of heaven. He must have been much in prayer or He could not have been so abundant in service and so gracious in sympathy.

1. St. Luke informs us that Jesus rose out of the waters praying. This is a solemn hint as to the spirit in which all Divine ordinances ought to be received. When we come to the

font seeking baptism either for ourselves or for others, when we sit at the Lord's Table, when we are on our way to church, when we open God's holy Word—as we take part in every such ordinance—we may learn from Jesus how to conduct ourselves: the best state of mind is, to be engaged in prayer.

2. What may we suppose He was praying for? If we remember the nature of the ordinance in which He was participating and the stage of His own development which He had reached, can we doubt that He was praying for the coming of the Kingdom of God and for strength to play His own part in its inauguration? That generally.

But now, more particularly, what should He have been praying about? Clearly, if He came to St. John as claiming to be no exception to the multitude, He would fashion His prayer after the likeness of that of the multitude. And of what kind were their feelings and utterances as they descended into the waters of Jordan? They were "confessing their sins." They had been moved to do something outside the Law, because they felt a burden which no law could remove—"the weary weight of all their unintelligible" selves. When every commandment had been kept, there still remained the consciousness of not having realized their own capacities, of having fallen below the level of what they might have been, what they were intended to be. This is the guilt born of our very dignity; it haunts the worthiest most; it is felt even by the meanest of us in hours of self-scrutiny. What could the carpenter's Son know of it? Little or nothing, if He were playing a part—pretending to heroism; much, if He were a genuine man; much also, if He were genuinely Divine; very much, therefore, if He were genuinely both—God and Man in one Person. Then He could have intense perceptions, would enter into the minds of others, and understand through sympathy what He did not learn by experience; then, knowing no sin, He could be "made sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in him."

ii. The Opening of the Heavens.

The answer to His prayer came suddenly and impressively. While He was yet speaking, His Father in heaven heard, and

three wonders happened: first the heavens were opened; secondly the Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove, descended on Him; and, thirdly, a voice came from heaven, saying: "Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased."

1. What is meant by the opening? The language used by the Evangelists is very graphic, suggesting that there was the appearance of a rent being made in the blue vault, by which the invisible things which lie within were disclosed. But what does this mean to us, who are well aware that the visible heaven is not what it was thought to be by the infant mind of the race—the floor of a celestial palace, the occupants and furnishings of which might be seen if an opening were made in the ceiling of our earthly abode?

The opening of the heavens was a magnificent emblem: it gave, at the very beginning of the Saviour's ministry, a vision, and, as it were, an epitome, of the whole work He came to do. He saw, it may be, for a brief moment, the glorious realm from which He had come to earth, and to which, through sorrow and toil, He was to make His way again. The heavens were opened to Him, as our Representative and Forerunner, thus giving us the assurance that every obstacle opposing our return to God would be overcome, and a way made for us into the very home of His dearest children.

2. This opening of the heavens is one of the most beautiful and significant circumstances connected with our Lord's visible ministry. Alas! that it should be with so many a poor and almost forgotten thing, like the gleam of the lightning, or the shining of the summer-day of a hundred years ago. With too many men the question is not, "Is heaven open above us, that we may have commerce there?"—but, "Is the earth open around us, that we may gather thence our comforts and our gains? Is the season good? Are the fields fruitful? Will the times soon mend? Will the click of machinery be heard ere long in full work in our mills, and the hum of revived trade in our towns?" These questions are good and right. A man is not worthy of his place in this great complex growing world if he does not feel an interest in such questions as these. But there are other questions

of wider scope which ought to arise in men's hearts, and for answer to which they ought to listen as for life.

There are not a few who have tried hard to make this world, out of what seemed to them its abundant riches, supply all their need without Jesus Christ: but who have been baffled—beaten at every turn. They have gained only to lose. They have rejoiced, only to feel more acutely the pang of the after vexation. They have striven and suffered and sorrowed, only to get for inheritance that old bequest, which Solomon, so long dead, is bequeathing still—"all is vanity." In their desolation they begin to think, and to ask, "Is it God who tells us that 'all is vanity'? Is He the King of an empty Universe? Is there with Him, in His gift, nothing better than the things we have won and lost?" And the answer comes—that there is a way opened to Himself; that He disappoints only that He may fulfil; He takes away the less that He may give the more; He darkens earth that He may show us heaven; He has reserved Himself and His fulness for our eternal portion. Lo! the heavens are opened to them and, wise at last, they find their inheritance there.

iii. The Descent of the Spirit.

1. The New Testament like the Old begins with the Spirit. Yet there is a difference in their beginnings. The Spirit of the Old Testament comes out from the darkness; it has to form the light by which we are to see it. But the Spirit of the New comes from light already created; it descends from the opened heavens. The Spirit of the Old Testament moves on the face of troubled waters; the Spirit of the New alights and reposes on the calm bosom of the Son of Man. No wonder the Spirit of the New Testament is like a dove; it has itself found peace in the heart of its own creation; it has reached in the soul of Jesus its Sabbath of rest.

2. The Holy Spirit, says St. Luke, "descended in a bodily form, as a dove, upon him." What, asks Stalker, was the dove which descended on Jesus? Was there a real dove, which, attracted by His gentleness, alighted on Him, as such creatures when domesticated will sometimes do on persons to whom they are drawn by kindness and amiability? Or was the dove a

form of light which glided, with dove-like motion, down on His head to point Him out, as at Saul's conversion a light above the brightness of the sun shone round about him? An ancient legend says that the whole valley of the Jordan was illuminated.

These questions are not easily answered now. At an earlier time Keble could say "It is probable that the appearance of fire, or of a bright cloud, which had taken in former times the shape of a pillar guiding the Israelites, and which afterwards took that of fiery tongues lighting on the Apostles, now hovered over the Blessed Jesus in somewhat of the form of a dove, with wings spreading over Him; and we may be certain that it came down with the gentle steady motion of a dove."

Alford is quite explicit: "The Holy Spirit descended not only in the manner of a dove, but in bodily form (Luke): which I cannot understand in any but the literal sense, as the bodily shape of a dove, seen by the Baptist. There can be no objection to this, the straightforward interpretation of the narrative, which does not equally apply to the Holy Spirit being visible at all, which John himself asserts Him to have been (John i. 32–34), even more expressly than is asserted here. Why the Creator Spirit may not have assumed an organized body bearing symbolical meaning, as well as any other material form, does not seem clear. This was the ancient, and is the only honest, interpretation. The express assertion of Luke, and the fact that all four Evangelists have used the same expression, which they would not have done if it were a mere *tertium comparationis*, are surely a sufficient refutation of this rationalizing (and, I may add, blundering) interpretation."[1]

iv. The Voice.

A "voice from heaven" was a familiar method of communicating the will of God. For examples of such voices in the Old Testament see Gen. xxi. 17, xxii. 11, 15; Ex. xix. 19, xx. 22; 1 Kings xix. 12, 13. In the Gospels the Father's Voice is heard thrice—at the Baptism and the Transfiguration (cf. 2 Pet. i. 17) and before the Passion (John xii. 28). The Voice was audible or articulate only to those who had "ears to hear" (John v. 37, xii. 29).

[1] H. Alford, *The Greek Testament*, i. 25.

The voice does not proclaim Jesus as the Messiah, as a legend would probably have represented. No such proclamation was needed either by Jesus or by the Baptist. The descent of the Spirit had told John that Jesus was the Christ (John i. 33). This voice from heaven, as afterwards at the Transfiguration (ix. 35), and again shortly before the Passion (John xii. 28), followed closely upon Christ's prayer, and may be regarded as the answer to it. His humanity was capable of needing the strength which the heavenly assurance gave. To call this voice from heaven the Bath-Kol of the Rabbis, or to treat it as analogous to it, is misleading. The Rabbinic Bath-Kol, or "Daughter-voice," is regarded as an echo of the voice of God; and the Jews liked to believe that it had been granted to them after the gift of prophecy had ceased. The utterances attributed to it are in some cases so frivolous or profane that the more intelligent Rabbis denounced it as a superstition.

II.

The Meaning of the Baptism.

i. Its Meaning to Christ Himself.

For Jesus Himself the Baptism was a transfiguring moment —one of the cardinal points in the development of His humanity, marking His transition from the life of a private man to the career of a public teacher. Some suppose that it was at this point that He became fully conscious of His unique relationship to God and grasped in all its majesty the plan of His subsequent career. There is more unanimity in the belief that it was now that He was endowed with the miraculous powers of which He was to make use in His ministry. In the Gospels His miracles are ascribed to the Holy Spirit. This does not mean that His own Divine power was not at work in them; it means that His human nature required to be potentiated by special gifts of the Holy Spirit, in order to be a fit organ through which His Divinity might act. And perhaps it was at this time that these gifts were conferred.

1. *The Baptism was the Father's witness to His Sonship.*—"A voice came out of heaven, Thou art my beloved Son." That voice

was to assure not Himself indeed but others of His Sonship. In all probability the consciousness of His Sonship had flashed upon Him in His childhood, perhaps at His first visit to the Temple, when He uttered the memorable words, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" (Luke ii. 49).

¶ Even though He may have needed no assurance of His Sonship, there are many of God's children who do. There are many ways in which the assurance may be given. I know we are not to wait for any gracious illapse of the Holy Ghost before we claim our place in the family of God through faith in Jesus Christ. I know, too, that there are various degrees of assurance, and various ways in which that assurance is borne in upon the newborn soul. There is an assurance which may be gained by looking first at the Cross, and being convinced by the Spirit as I gaze upon Him who hangs there that judgment will not be twice demanded,

> First at my bleeding Surety's hands,
> And then again at mine.

And this assurance is deepened when I see the empty tomb, and hear the triumphant cry, "He is not here, but is risen." "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us" (Rom. viii. 34). All this is true, and most reassuring truth it is; and yet there is another way in which assurance is borne in upon the soul; it is that of which the Apostle speaks in Rom. viii. 16—"The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit"—the direct witness of the Holy Ghost to the soul that we are born again, and that we are no more servants but sons, and "if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together" (Rom. viii. 17). And this is the witness that the baptism of the Holy Ghost bestows.[1]

> Our Master all the work hath done
> He asks of us to-day;
> Sharing His service, every one
> Share too His sonship may.
> Lord, I would serve and be a son;
> Dismiss me not, I pray.[2]

[1] E. W. Moore, *The Spirit's Seal*, 32.
[2] T. T. Lynch, *The Rivulet*, 2.

(1) As a witness to His Sonship it had both a retrospective and a prospective reference. Jesus had left behind all the doings of those quiet, peaceful years, and was at the dividing line between private and public life. He was leaving behind Him the years of His obscurity, and coming out into the fierce light that ever beats upon a public teacher. And there, at the parting of the ways, God lit up all the years that had gone, with the sweet words of approval, "Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased." It could not have been a pronouncement upon the temptation in the wilderness; that was as yet an untried pathway. It could not have been a declaration of the Divine pleasure with Gethsemane's garden and Calvary's Cross; they were still to be reached. No, it must have been a reference to the past, so that whatever else we know, or do not know, about the hidden years of the life of Jesus, this one thing is certain, that through them all He pleased God; for God put His seal upon them when they were closing behind Him, and the new years were opening before Him, saying, "I am well pleased."

(2) But it was also a prophecy of the future. Our Lord's public ministry lay between two Calvarys: it not only culminated in Calvary, it started from it. The baptism in Jordan was nothing less than an anticipation, a prophecy, of the Cross itself; it was the deepest act of self-abasement of which our blessed Lord was capable. As the sinner's representative, He felt bound to take the sinner's place, to be treated, in short, as the sinner needed to be treated. Therefore when the Baptist, instinctively recoiling from administering an ordinance emblematic of the washing away of sin to Him who "knew no sin," exclaimed, "I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?" the answer he received was, "Suffer it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." As if He would say, "I am in the sinner's place to-day; I must accept to the full all that that position involves, or I shall fail in that uttermost obedience to the Father's will, apart from which my work of redemption cannot be achieved." We cannot fathom the depth of self-abasement which this descent into Jordan involved to Him who was none other than the brightness of His Father's glory and the express image of His Person; but we see how God estimated it when we read that, as Jesus came up out of the water, "the

heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him."

2. *The Baptism was His consecration for His work.*—The rite of baptism had two significations. In the case of a Gentile it signified the putting away of idolatry, and the acceptance of the worship of Jehovah. In the case of the Jew it signified the removal of his uncleanness. In both these instances the meaning was the washing away of sin. Then the second significance was consecration to office. In our Saviour's case this is at least the chief meaning. We have only to look at His life to see how far this was realized. For righteousness' sake, or fulfilment of a rite which was observed by the nation, the Saviour stood before the multitude and received the ordinance, repeating the prayer usual on such occasions. This was the commencement of a series of acts of consecration which terminated in Gethsemane and on the Cross.

(1) It was a consecration for the *conflict* that lay before Him. Was it not significant that immediately after the reception of the Holy Spirit He should be brought into a personal encounter with the evil spirit? that immediately after such a manifestation of Divine favour there should be such a manifestation of Satanic power? that face to face and foot to foot in the solitudes of the wilderness the Second Adam should have to grapple with our Adversary, to fight our battle and win our cause?

(2) It was a consecration for the *service* He had to accomplish. This was the opening of Christ's missionary career. Up to this time He had lived a life of obscurity in Nazareth. He was content for thirty out of the thirty-three years He spent on earth to be unknown outside the little circle of His own immediate friends and acquaintances, so unknown that Nathanael said "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" (John i. 46). Thirty years' preparation for three years' service! His hour had come, and the Divine voice bade Him enter on His ministry of toil.

(3) It was a consecration to the *suffering* that He had to undergo. His life henceforth was to be a living martyrdom. Suffering was to be His lot. As has been truly said, "God had one Son without sin, but not one without suffering."

¶ The sufferings of Christ were altogether distinct from ours. We suffer, knowing that we have deserved more than we can ever bear. He suffered, knowing that He had deserved nothing. We suffer for others' sin, knowing that even in our purest experience we have some sympathy with sin. He suffered, conscious of no such sympathy. Many a martyr, following his Lord's example, has gone to as bitter a physical death as his Lord, singing as he went. Jesus went to His death, shrinking and sore amazed, and in a horror of fear before it. It was the burden He bore there that broke Him down. It was your sins and mine that bowed Him as they never bowed, never can bow, us down. He was "made sin for us." "This is my body broken for you." "The Son of man giveth his life instead of many." "By his stripes we are healed." "The chastisement of our peace was laid upon him." "We all like sheep had gone astray; we had turned every one to his own way," and "the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." That is what takes the sting and curse out of life for me. That uproots the weed; that repairs the breach; that sweetens the sour. The fact that there are thistles in this world of God's, and that they have to be taken out of it, is not so difficult to understand when a pierced hand has been pulling up thistles in the heart's acre.[1]

ii. Its Meaning to us.

1. In the narrative of the Baptism, as has often been observed, we have the participation of the three Persons of the Trinity. There flows from it therefore a threefold blessing to men.

(1) *Divine reconciliation* is assured to us in this manifestation of the Son of God. To the personal "Jesus" is now to be added the title of the Christ—the Messiah, the Anointed One. In the inn at Bethlehem, in the workshop at Nazareth, we see Jesus. In this baptism at Jordan, in His ministry in Galilee and Judæa, we behold the Christ. In His Person He assures us of reconciliation between God and man. Without Him sin would for ever bar our admission into the presence of the Most High. But He is the Righteous One, who not only has done no sin, but has fulfilled all righteousness.

(2) *Divine renewal* is assured to us in the manifestation of the Spirit of God. Thus did the Father anoint the Son with the Holy Ghost and with power (Acts x. 38); and though the sight of this

[1] R. W. Barbour, *Thoughts*, 52.

heavenly effluence in dove-like form appears to have been seen only by Christ Himself and the Baptist, yet the witness is for us. The very emblem of the dove is full of teaching as to the character of the Christian renewal. We sing to the Holy Spirit:

> Come as the dove, and spread Thy wings,
> The wings of peace and love.

But this emblem is never used in Scripture except in connexion with the Son of God. It is only in Him that the Spirit of Holiness can dwell with sinners. Yet even so the dove tells us of the perfect purity in Christ for us; and likewise the effects of this bestowal of the Spirit upon Jesus reveal the same truth. By that Spirit He wrought His miracles and spoke His words of grace, and after His resurrection that Spirit was sent in His name, bringing to the world life and power and holiness. Sin is, so to speak, the hiatus of human nature, and the Spirit ministers that holiness which is lacking.

(3) Lastly, *Divine restoration* is assured to us by the testimony of the Father: "Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased." The self-same words are repeated towards the close of our Lord's ministry, on the Mount of Transfiguration. St. Peter, writing many years afterwards, doubly assures us thereof, saying, "He received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven, we heard when we were with him in the holy mount" (2 Pet. i. 17, 18). And, in addition to this testimony of words, we have the still more substantial testimony given by the Father to the Son when He raised Him from the dead (1 Pet. i. 21), and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places (Eph. i. 20). So we sing in the Te Deum, "When Thou hadst overcome the sharpness of Death, Thou didst open the kingdom of heaven to all believers." For the Father, to use the inspired words of the Apostle Paul, "hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."

¶ "All alone, so Heaven has willed, we die"; but, as travellers are cheered on a solitary road when they see the footprints that they know belonged to loved and trusted ones who have trodden it before, that desolate loneliness is less lonely when we think

that He became dead. He will come to the shrinking single soul, as He joined Himself to the sad travellers on the road to Emmaus, and "our hearts" may burn within us even in that last hour of their beating if we can remember who has become dead and trodden the road before us.[1]

¶ Christ is made the law of the law, the sin of sin, the death of death, that He might redeem from the curse of the law, justify me and quicken me. While He is the law, He is also liberty; while He is sin, He is righteousness; while He is death, He is life. For in that He suffered the law to accuse Him, sin to condemn Him, and death to devour Him, He abolished the law, He condemned sin, He destroyed death, He justified and saved me.[2]

2. But there is value in the Baptism for us in this also, that He is our example.

(1) He is our example of *Faith*. "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them" (Mark xi. 24). The Saviour left it all with God. It was believing prayer. Was His faith disappointed? It could not be. Heaven opened upon Him. The Holy Dove descended. The mighty deed was done. This is our pattern. Christ fulfilled the conditions, and according to His faith it was unto Him. Surely from that open heaven a voice speaks to us, "The promise is to you and to your children": "Go and do thou likewise."

¶ To as many of us as by His grace to us are true believers on Him and in His blood, our Lord's own faith in His Father and in His Father's word to Him is a subject of the intensest interest, the most edifying meditation, and the most transporting reflection. To as many of us as believe there is no subject in heaven or on earth like our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the true learning. This is the true knowledge. This is the true science and philosophy; and not falsely so called. This is the wisdom that cometh from above. This is the wisdom of God in a mystery. This, O Father, is life eternal, to know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent.[3]

¶ It was in Gethsemane and on Calvary that the faith of our Substitute came to its absolute perfection. Loaded down to death and hell with the sin of the world, our Saviour's faith in His Father's sure word of promise was such that His burdened heart rose victorious above all the tremendous load that was laid

[1] Alexander Maclaren. [2] Luther, *Commentary on Galatians*, 204.
[3] A. Whyte, *The Walk, Conversation, and Character of Jesus Christ our Lord*, 181.

upon Him. Our Saviour had the fullest assurance of faith, the fullest assurance that His Father who had begun such a good work in Him and by Him would not leave it till He had perfected it in the day of Christ. And thus it was that, as Bengel says, "the most fragrant part of Christ's sin-atoning sacrifice was His unshaken trust in His Father's faithfulness and love."[1]

¶ Mr. Erskine had a strong conviction that in Romans iii. 22 "the faith of Christ" meant "the faith of Christ in His Father." I mentioned that this was identically the view entertained by Mr. Dunbar Heath, who was deprived of his benefice for holding this amongst other doctrines. Mr. Erskine had never heard of him.[2]

(2) Of *Obedience.*—Jesus received the Holy Spirit at a time of uttermost obedience. Do not imagine that it is such a simple thing to receive the Spirit in His fulness. It is simple when the conditions are fulfilled, but not otherwise. And the first condition is obedience. See Acts v. 32—"the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given" (not to every one) "to them that obey him." So in Matt. iii. 15, "Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." It was quite unnecessary, from the human standpoint, for Christ to be baptized by John, but the Lord yielded to it.

¶ Christ is not a teacher of the law, like Moses, but a disciple who would be obedient to the law, that through such subjection and obedience He might redeem those who were under the law.[3]

¶ "Compassed with infirmity," appointed to suffering, our Lord entered into the deepest experience of humanity, and attained the secret of perfect obedience to the will of God. We may see in our suffering Lord how through sanctified suffering we attain harmony with the eternal will. One of the greatest of modern artists reminds his young brethren that artistic perfection is reached, not through easy and pleasant exercises, but through battles and agonies. How much more the immortal perfection of the spirit! Let me not resent the discipline of trial. A famous traveller tells us that it is a principle thoroughly believed in by all Asiatics, that the bitterer the remedy the more efficacious it is. This may not be true in physic, but it is certainly true in morals, when our sorrows are ordained by God and accompanied by His

[1] A. Whyte.
[2] Dean Stanley, in *Letters of Thomas Erskine of Linlathen*, ii. 291.
[3] Luther, *Table-talk* (ed. by Förstemann), i. 352.

grace. Let me not, then, wear the fool's cap in the school of suffering, but fully learn the great lessons of submission, patience, trust.[1]

(3) Of *Prayer*.—It was at a time of prayer that Christ received the Spirit. Prayer is the condition of receiving the Spirit. "Yet for all this will I be inquired of by them, to do it for them" (Ezek. xxxvi. 37). We shall never know what this baptism means unless we obey, believe, and pray.

¶ I rejoice to know of your interest in the great theme—the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. I am now more and more persuaded that the greatest things are possible if only we have His power resting upon us. I have seen such a demonstration in my church last year as I never witnessed before. We met morning after morning in the early year simply to pray for the power of the Holy Ghost. We were looking for a revival. When I made my plea for foreign missions, I astonished my conservative brethren by asking ten thousand dollars this year for our contribution. Only a few wealthy men among us, and they not likely to do largely. But when the collection was gathered twenty thousand dollars came, nobody asked, no solicitation made. It was simply a great impulse of the Spirit, and the astonishment of all still continues. Now is coming a gracious ingathering of souls.[2]

[1] W. L. Watkinson, *The Gates of Dawn*, 288.
[2] *A. J. Gordon: A Biography*, 258.

Prayer and Choice.

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Prayer and Choice.

And it came to pass in these days, that he went out into the mountain to pray; and he continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, he called [his disciples; and he chose from them twelve, whom also he named apostles.—Luke vi. 12, 13.

1. The praying Christ is a prominent figure in each of the four Gospels, and in none more so than in the Gospel according to Luke. Indeed, it seems to have been the special care of this Evangelist to call attention to the prayerfulness of Christ. He refers to no fewer than six of the Lord's prayers which are unnoticed by the other Evangelists—the prayer at His baptism, after cleansing the leper, before calling the Apostles, at His transfiguration, on the cross for His murderers, and with His dying breath. It is like Luke, with his clear insight into the needs of our nature, to give us such a glimpse of the Lord's spirit and character. And it assuredly accords with the general tone of the "Gospel of Human-heartedness," as this Third Gospel has been called. At least it gives an ideal completeness to his portraiture of Christ's humanity; for this Gospel is pre-eminently the Gospel of the perfect Son of Man. Christ prayed, and prayed much. The seasons of communion with God the Father were of very frequent occurrence, and formed the habit rather than the exception of His life on earth. He prayed. It was not only a habit but a necessity of His life; He could not have accomplished His work on earth, He could not have fulfilled His Father's will, without constant prayer.

2. The scene of this lonely vigil is the same, in all probability, as that of the Sermon on the Mount. As described by recent observers, "it is a hill with a summit which closely resembles an Oriental saddle with its two high peaks. On the west it rises very little above the level of a broad and undulating plain; on the east it sinks precipitately towards a plateau, on which lies,

immediately beneath the cliffs, the village of Hattin; and from this plateau the traveller descends through a wild and tropic gorge to the shining levels of the Lake of Galilee. It is the only conspicuous hill on the western side of the lake, and it is singularly adapted by its conformation to form both a place for short retirement and a rendezvous for gathering multitudes." Hither at nightfall, alone, weary, burdened with a world's redemption, came Christ to pray. The stars came out one by one above Him, the silence deepened around Him as the night wore on, and when, after midnight had passed and the morning star stood in the heavens, the first ray of dawn tipped the trans-Jordanic hills, Christ was still in this communion with His Father.

¶ I wonder if we have sufficiently observed our Lord's love of the heights, and of the ministry of the heights upon His spirit. Have we all experienced the subtle ministry of hill and mountain? There is something even in physical altitude which helps the elevation of the soul. There is something in wide spaces which aids the expansiveness of prayer, and redeems it from narrowness and meanness. And then a mountain by night! There we have height and depth, with the allied ministry of mysterious silence. There is an absence of glare and glamour, and in the deep hush the primary voice becomes audible. And then, again, "all night in prayer to God"! Think of it—the night, the ceaseless communion! Let us not suppose that the Master spent the night in speech. There would be seasons of quiet listening, perhaps seasons when familiar psalms were sung, and seasons when He just comfortably realized the enwrapping presence of the Father in heaven. Now and again there would be the cry of a sheep or a lamb, and the lone plaint would make His own purpose emerge, as the Shepherd whose mission it was to seek and to succour wandering sheep. And I wonder what the dawn would have to say to Him, and whether in its growing radiance He would foresee the gradual illumination of the whole world with the evangel of His love and grace. Be that as it may, the night was thus spent as a preparative to the choice of the morrow. He sought to be perfectly attuned to His Father's will, in order that all His decisions might be one with the mind of the Father in heaven. "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do." [1]

¶ Thoreau's love of mountains is exemplified in many passages of his diary, and the occasional excursions which he made to the

[1] J. H. Jowett

lofty outlying ranges visible from the Concord hills formed some of the most pleasing episodes in his life. "'A mountain chain," he says, "determines many things for the statesman and philosopher. The improvements of civilization rather creep along its sides than cross its summit. How often is it a barrier to prejudice and fanaticism! In passing over these heights of land, through their thin atmosphere, the follies of the plain are refined and purified; and as many species of plants do not scale their summits, so many species of folly no doubt do not cross the Alleghanies."[1]

Take the text in three divisions—

I. Our Lord's Habit of Prayer.

II. The Occasion of the Night-long Prayer.

III. The Answer to the Prayer.

I.

Our Lord's Habit of Prayer.

1. The impression which the records of Christ's prayers make on us is that these prayers are the indexes to His whole life as a life of prayerfulness. They suggest to us the fact that He made so much of prayer as to avail Himself of every possible outward aid to devotion. He who was careful to instruct men that they were to enter into their closet and shut the door and pray to God in secret—He sought the stillness of night-seasons and mountain-tops, the calming influences of perfect solitude far from the madding crowd. These notices disclose to us the fact that Christ's devotional life here and there came out in transcendent intensity and volume, taking for its needed expression whole nights upon mountain-tops.

(1) Why should Jesus pray? In the first place, it was natural for Him to pray, *because He was the Son of God.* Prayer at its best is, if one may be allowed the expression, conversation with God, the confidential talk of a child who tells everything to his father. There is a remarkable example of this in the Confessions of St. Augustine. This great book is in the form of a prayer from beginning to end; yet it narrates its author's history and expounds the most important of his opinions. Evidently the good man had got into the habit of doing all his deepest thinking

[1] H. S. Salt, *Henry David Thoreau*, 65.

in the form of conversation with God. If this be what prayer is, it is not difficult to understand how the Eternal Son should have prayed to the Eternal Father. Indeed it is easy to see that, in this sense, He must have prayed without ceasing.

(2) Jesus also needed to pray *because He was the Son of Man.* Prayer was the sign and proof of His having been made in all things like unto His brethren—a veritable son of man. It was the surest evidence He ever gave, on the spiritual side of His being, of His perfect and complete manhood. Hunger and thirst and weariness and pain told the story of His humanity, as far as the frail tabernacle of the flesh was concerned. But prayer—the cry of want, the language of dependence and trust, the words of submission and obedience to the will of God the Father—bespoke the reality of His spiritual humanity, and showed, more clearly than aught else could show, that in the inner life of thought and feeling, mind and spirit, the Lord Jesus was one with ourselves.

It is true that there are provinces in the realm of prayer which were foreign to Him. He never traversed them during the whole of His life. They lay entirely outside His experience as One who was "holy, guileless, undefiled, separated from sinners." He had no need, as we have, to confess sin or to use in any sense the language of penitence, and to ask, as we must do, for Divine pardon. And this, in all His approaches to God, Jesus Christ is never shown to have done. And yet, because He was man, partaker of our nature and our name, He must needs pray.

> He sought the mountain and the loneliest height,
> For He would meet His Father all alone,
> And there, with many a tear and many a groan,
> He strove in prayer throughout the long, long night.
> Why need He pray, who held by filial right,
> O'er all the world alike of thought and sense,
> The fulness of His Sire's omnipotence?
> Why crave in prayer what was His own by might?
> Vain is the question,—Christ was man in deed,
> And being man His duty was to pray.
> The Son of God confess'd the human need,
> And doubtless ask'd a blessing every day.
> Nor ceases yet for sinful man to plead,
> Nor will, till heaven and earth shall pass away.[1]

[1] Hartley Coleridge.

2. Jesus loved the solitudes. "He went out into the mountain to pray." In Palestine, as in many parts of Scotland, there is mountain everywhere. A mile or two from any town you are out on it. You have only to quit the houses, cross a few acres of cultivated ground, and your feet are on the turfy pastures, where you can be absolutely alone. Jesus had, if we may so speak, made the discovery that He could obtain this solitude anywhere; and, when He arrived in a town, His first thought was, which was the shortest road to the mountain,—just as ordinary travellers inquire where are the most noted sights and which is the best hotel.

¶ Never did I feel more strongly that in this habit Jesus had laid bare one of the great secrets of life than one day when I climbed all alone a hill above Inverary and lay on the summit of it, musing through a summer forenoon. On every hand there stretched a solitary world of mountain and moorland; the loch below was gleaming in the sun like a shield of silver; the town was visible at the foot of the hill, and the passengers could be seen moving in the streets, but no sound of its bustle reached so high. The great sky was over all; and God seemed just at hand, waiting to hear every word. It was in spots like this that Jesus prayed.[1]

3. The prayer of Jesus was a sustained effort. "He continued all night in prayer to God." All night He prayed, when the great task of choosing the twelve apostles lay close before Him. And this, although the Father had said, "Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased"; and although He Himself could say, "I know that thou hearest me always." And this, also, although He had forbidden long prayers and frequent repetitions, and over-anxiety about the morrow. Was He then anxious for the morrow? Assuredly He was. But was He doing that which He deprecates in the Sermon on the Mount? Assuredly not. The conduct of Christ rather illustrates than contradicts His teaching there.

When we read that Jesus prayed all night, we cannot think of Him as uttering words all night. He who upbraided men for using vain repetitions, and told them that they were not heard for their much speaking, and taught them the shortest and most comprehensive form of prayer, would not be likely to construe the

[1] J. Stalker, *Imago Christi*, 133.

act of prayer into a continuous verbal appeal in His own case. We may conceive of this all-night prayer as a conscious laying open of His soul before God, a devout lifting up of His heart to the tender out-reaching of God, a grateful appropriation of the sweet rich gifts and influences of Nature, which are themselves true emanations of God. We seem to see that gracious, solitary figure of the Lord, dimly outlined under the dewy canopy of the night, with the clear eastern stars pouring down their lustre; sometimes the figure would be kneeling on the mountain side in the attitude of prayer, sometimes He would be seated on some grey crag lost in deepest thought, sometimes He would be simply resting in the ample solitude, drinking in the quiet peace of the holy time, abandoning Himself to the enfolding beauty of the midnight scene —alone with Nature, with His own brooding thoughts, and with His Father. It was not a time of idle dreaming or a mood of empty reverie; it was a time of real, earnest, conscious self-recovery and self-preparation for the arduous work before Him.[1]

¶ Nothing was more easy to me now than to practise prayer. Hours passed away like moments, while I could hardly do anything else but pray. The fervency of my love allowed me no intermission. It was a prayer of rejoicing and of possession, wherein the taste of God was so great, so pure, unblended and uninterrupted, that it drew and absorbed the powers of the soul into a profound recollection, a state of confiding and affectionate rest in God, existing without intellectual effort. For I had now no sight but of Jesus Christ alone. All else was excluded, in order to love with greater purity and energy, without any motives or reasons for loving which were of a selfish nature.[2]

4. Christ's prayerfulness was balanced by incessant activities. Paint His devotional life in never so vivid colours, His working life keeps in harmony with every tint and outline. In fact, what gives this picture in the text—Christ praying alone on the mountain-top through the long night-watches—its great power and glory is that He went to that mountain-top after one day of toil, and would come down from it to engage in another exactly like it; so that, if a disciple could say of His unrecorded works that the world itself could not contain the books that might be

[1] W. A. Mursell, *Sermons on Special Occasions*, 64.
[2] Madame Guyon, in *Life* by T. C. Upham, 38.

written to record them, it might also be said that those works of Jesus, so incessant, so numberless, so gracious, are only the outgrowth of an answering prayerfulness.

¶ When Luther had a specially busy and exciting day, he allowed himself longer time than usual for prayer beforehand. A wise man once said that he was too busy to be in a hurry: he meant that, if he allowed himself to become hurried, he could not do all that he had to do. There is nothing like prayer for producing this calm self-possession. When the dust of business so fills your room that it threatens to choke you, sprinkle it with the water of prayer, and then you can cleanse it out with comfort and expedition.[1]

¶ Sister Dora spoke unreservedly to her household upon the absolute necessity of constant private prayer, and expressed openly her own strong conviction that no blessing could attend the hospital unless those who worked in it fulfilled their duty in this respect. It was literally true that she never touched a wound without lifting up her heart to the Giver of all virtue, and asking that healing might be conveyed by her means; that she never set a fracture without a prayer that, through her instrumentality, the limb might unite. As she attended upon the surgeons during an operation, the most absorbing and anxious of a nurse's duties, where the patient's life must often, humanly speaking, depend on readiness of eye and instantaneous comprehension of the slightest sign on the part of the operating surgeon, and on intelligent obedience to his orders, she seemed able to separate her bodily and intellectual from her spiritual powers, which were engaged in holding communion with that Being in whose Hand are the issues of life and death.[2]

II.

The Occasion of the Night-Long Prayer.

1. We come here to a new departure in our Lord's Messianic mission. The selection of the Twelve by Jesus from among those who had been led to believe in Him, to be His Apostles, and be with Him during His earthly ministry, and then take up the work, and carry it forward after He left the world, is an important

[1] J. Stalker, *Imago Christi*, 138.
[2] M. Lonsdale, *Sister Dora*, 102.

landmark in the history of the gospel dispensation. We are not informed as to the particular time in His ministry at which He made the selection, but we know that He had preached and laboured for some time alone and single-handed. It seems that His selection of the Apostles at this time had become a necessity to Him in carrying forward the work for which He came into the world. He had won many followers, and as it was necessary that some should be with Him all the time to be His witnesses, and as the multitudes who attended on His ministry could not follow Him from place to place, especially in the journeys that marked the latter part of His ministry, He chose the Twelve for this purpose, and ordained them to this end. So Mark tells us that Jesus called unto Him whom He would, and they came unto Him, and He chose twelve that they should be with Him.

¶ There is one letter to his sister written from Massowah in 1878, in which General Gordon writes freely about mission work in North Africa.

"There is not the least doubt that there is an immense virgin field for an apostle in these countries among the black tribes. But where will you find an apostle? I will explain what I mean by that term. He must be a man who has died entirely to the world; who has no ties of any sort; who longs for death when it may please God to take him; who can bear the intense dullness of these countries; who seeks for few letters; and who can bear the thought of dying deserted. Now, there are few, very, very few men, who can accept this post. But no half-measures will do. . . . A man must give up everything, understand everything, to do anything for Christ here. No half nor three-quarter measures will do. And yet, what a field!"[1]

2. This new departure called for special preparation and prayer. When we consider the ground on which this election of Apostles had to be made, the work to which they were to be called, we can the better understand why even He should have spent the whole night in prayerful preparation for the task of the coming day.

These men were to be the companions of His ministry, fellow-workers unto His Kingdom, workers of miracles in His name, preachers of His gospel of salvation from sin and death; and, above all, living witnesses, when He had gone from the world,

[1] R. E. Speer, *Some Great Leaders*, 292

both of the historic truths of His life, and of the supernatural and holy character of the religion He set forth by word and deed. This is the chief point—they were to be witnesses of Him; not so much of what He said and did, as of what He was in Himself; witnesses of His holiness, of His grace, of His Divine love and compassion and sympathy for men; witnesses in their own lives to the power of His life to sanctify and uplift and save men. He foresees that they will have to take in hand His work when He is no more with them in the flesh, and to be responsible under God for carrying it on in His name. The heaviest part of their task will consist, not in having to speak of Him and for Him, but in having to show to the world what was the spirit of His own perfect life. The Apostles themselves felt this. Speaking for them all—himself included—Paul declares the purpose of their ministry to be, "that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh." Every true-hearted and well-instructed Christian worker feels this to-day. Christ foresaw it all on this night of ceaseless prayer; and His chief care was to have men morally and spiritually capable of being witnesses to His truth and holiness.

¶ Afterwards he said: "That was an awful thought of Ruskin's, that artists paint God for the world. There's a lump of greasy pigment at the end of Michael Angelo's hog-bristle brush, and by the time it has been laid on the stucco, there is something there that all men with eyes recognize as divine. Think of what it means. It is the power of bringing God into the world—making God manifest. It is giving back her Child that was crucified to Our Lady of the Sorrows."[1]

3. In most respects this was the most important work that had ever been done for the world. As the sun rose to chase away the darkness from the eastern horizon, the Sun of Righteousness arose from a sleepless night spent in prayer to chase away the moral and spiritual darkness that had so long covered the earth, and the gross darkness that to so great an extent covers the people to this day. This was the first organized effort at the world's evangelization. This was the first missionary society ever organized for the purpose of preaching the gospel to every creature. In the glorious light of our gospel day, this was a morning worthy of everlasting remembrance. There is missionary

[1] *Memorials of Sir Edward Burne-Jones.*

inspiration in this early morning scene. The organization of the college of Apostles was followed by the greatest sermon that was ever preached, and that sermon was followed by the healing of the leper and the sick, and by other events that were proper and appropriate at the beginning of a movement that is to go on blessing the world until the day of time shall close, and an eternal morning shall break on a world redeemed and a church eternally established without spot or wrinkle or any such thing.

III.

The Answer to the Prayer.

1. Jesus received on the mountain-top a reinforcement of vigour and vision. There is a mysterious power in Nature to unseal the eyes of the soul, and Jesus, the Divine Poet, received many a rich gift of vision from the lessons He learned in her school. He received that wondrous healing from Nature which we are slowly coming to understand better and to rejoice in to-day; and it may well be that some of that mystic healing virtue which flowed from Jesus like a tide was partly due to His profound understanding of some of Nature's deepest secrets. And these reinforcements are close at hand, and may be ours if we will but seize and use them. Nature is in very truth a symbol of Divine things, a treasury of holy thoughts, a storehouse of God's own secrets; and to meditate and pray in the midst of Nature's wonder and beauty as Jesus did—to ask, seek, and knock earnestly at the door of her vast treasury—is to become gladder in heart, fresher in mind, more powerful in spiritual understanding and discernment. Tennyson had this in view when he wrote:—

> Flower in the crannied wall,
> I pluck you out of the crannies,
> I hold you here, root and all, in my hand,
> Little flower—but *if* I could understand,
> What you are, root and all, and all in all,
> I should know what God and man is.

¶ The balance of thought is a delicate thing, and it is often dislocated by the frets and shocks and burdens of life, and there

is no such restorer of the mind's poise and peace as Nature. Often have I found myself unable to see my way clear through a process of thought, and have thrown down my pen in a bewilderment almost akin to panic or despair, and I have gone out and found the solution of my problem or the thread of my sermon on the open moor or the green hill-side.[1]

¶ When a friend once said to Browning: "You have not a great love for nature, have you?" he had replied: "Yes, I have, but I love men and women better;" and the admission, which conveyed more than it literally expressed, would have been true I believe, at any, up to the present, period of his history. Even now he did not cease to love men and women best; but he found increasing enjoyment in the beauties of nature, above all as they opened upon him on the southern slopes of the Alps; and the delight of the æsthetic sense merged gradually in the satisfied craving for pure air and brilliant sunshine which marked his final struggle for physical life. A ring of enthusiasm comes into his letters from the mountains, and deepens as the years advance; doubtless enhanced by the great—perhaps too great—exhilaration which the Alpine atmosphere produced, but also in large measure independent of it. Each new place into which the summer carries him he declares more beautiful than the last. It possibly was so.[2]

> No man may live unto himself, and yet
> How poor are they that scorn their Olivet!—
> Who, in their turmoil, seek not day or night
> The sanctuary of the mountain height,
> Fulfilled with whose indomitable breath
> Long time ago the Lord of Nazareth
> Raised up the fallen and subdued the strong,
> And woke the stars to universal song.[3]

2. The special answer to Jesus' prayer is seen in the selection of the Twelve. In the great high-priestly prayer, recorded by St. John, the Saviour three times over speaks of the disciples as the gift of God. They are known in the Church as "the glorious company of the apostles." They merit the praise they have received and will continue to receive from the believers in Christ through all ages, but their glory was not of this world. The

[1] W. A. Mursell.
[2] Mrs. Sutherland Orr, *Life and Letters of R. Browning*, 302.
[3] G. Thomas, *Birds of Passage*, 44.

world looked upon them, in their day, as a very insignificant company. They were regarded as a band of poor, illiterate Galileans. They had no social prestige, no influence, with the great and powerful of earth. All of them, except Judas the traitor, were from Galilee, a section that was looked down on by the Jews, and had no special influence among any other people.

¶ Consider how large a part of the New Testament is occupied with the story of the lives and labours, the spoken and written words, of the men who belonged to this first apostolate. By their life-work Christ's Kingdom was made known in all parts of the Roman Empire within forty years of His ascension. How well they did His work; how faithfully they carried out His great commission; how nobly they bore witness to the facts and doctrines of the Gospel, and, above all, to the spirit and power of His life, the first pages of Church history, and their own Epistles, tell. We must not overlook the fact that the life of every one of these Apostles, with its far-reaching results, was an answer to His prayer—a gift of God. Every such life was a "fruit-tree bearing fruit, wherein is the seed thereof"; and that seed is growing to-day in every soil and in every climate over the whole earth. The answers to Christ's prayer multiply and increase for ever. We speak of "the conservation of force." There is a force in activity around us continually, a force which science takes no account of, and cannot explain. It is a force which is not only conserved but increased, whenever and wherever it is exercised. Christ used it and taught us to use it—"the force of prayer."[1]

3. The answer to the grandest prayer is wrapped in mystery. Who can escape the question, "If these men were chosen as the result of all this prayer—perfect, faultless prayer—why was Judas among their number? Was his election part of the answer?" Why Judas was chosen at all is not clearly shown. What his character was at the time of his joining the apostolic band we cannot tell; although we may reasonably suppose that it was such as justified his election; and that he broke the fair promise of his early discipleship, and sank at last in the mire of covetousness, deceit, and villainy. But then comes the question, Was not all this foreseen by Him who gave and by Him who chose a man of this type to be among the Twelve? From this question

[1] W. E. Winks, *The Gospel of Prayer*, 55.

will arise many others touching Divine foreordination and human freedom. These mysteries are not fully solved in the words of Christ, and evidently were not meant to be solved. They are still left among the "secret things" which "belong unto God."

Yet one point comes out clearly from His words. In the answer our Lord received to this prayer, as in the prayer itself, there are elements both Divine and human. Turning to God, Christ spoke of the Twelve as "those whom thou hast given me"; turning to these men themselves, He said, "Have I not chosen you?" And the men themselves are permitted to hear both declarations, to see both sides or poles of the sphere of truth. We may rest assured that it is ever thus with answers to prayer: like the prayers themselves, their answers are both "from God and of man." We are allowed to see this at least—and it is of inestimable value to us—that God's blessing in response to our supplications comes to us along the lines of our own faculties, and in reward for our proper use of them. The Great Creator always honours His own gifts by making their legitimate exercise the condition of His favour. The praying Christ came under this law of life. Otherwise the history of His earthly sojourn must have been written in very different terms, and the prayers He offered to God could have been no pattern and encouragement for us.

¶ Lately I have asked specially in prayer, with a large faith in God's goodness, for one or two things, but the prayer has brought no sign of an answer. This has not in the least affected my confidence in God, but it has led me to ask myself whether that sort of prayer is right, or whether the best way is just to tell out to God your difficulty or trouble, and then rest in the confidence that in His own way and His own time the best will come to pass. Whatever happens, time will roll on, bringing me—and, I trust, my loved ones—safe home, and that should be enough.[1]

Oft when of God we ask
For fuller, happier life,
He sets us some new task
Involving care and strife.
Is this the boon for which we sought?
Has prayer new trouble on us brought?

[1] *J. Brash: Memorials and Correspondence*, 160.

This is indeed the boon,
 Though strange to us it seems;
We pierce the rock, and soon
 The blessing on us streams;
For when we are the most athirst,
Then the clear waters on us burst

Forgiveness.

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Forgiveness.

And he said unto the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.—Luke vii. 50.

The woman in this story is described as a sinner. But there was something in her not dead to good, and one day she had stood on the edge of the crowd when all the publicans and sinners drew near to Jesus to hear Him, and had heard Him with the rest. As she listened and looked on His face, it dawned upon her that there was something in the world of which she had never dreamed. She had often seen good people, or those who were counted such, men and women who drew in their robes as they passed her that they might not be defiled by her touch; but here was One whose goodness was unmistakable, who was pure and holy through and through, yet who did not repel such as she, but "received sinners and ate with them." Often she had mourned her lost innocence, but never till now had she believed in the possibility of restoration. Now she did believe. A holy One who receives sinners, who is inexorable to sin but infinitely gracious to the sinful, is forgiveness incarnate; He is a pledge of reconciling and restoring love that sweeps away every sense of human wrongs. And as the woman looked upon Jesus, her heart dissolved in penitence and love unutterable, and she was born again.

So when she hears that He is in the Pharisee's house, what can she do but hasten thither, and brave the cruel, scornful looks of the respectable people there, to get near Him who has loosed her bonds? She finds no difficulty in making her way to the table. Silently she kneels behind Him, with a cruse of ointment in her hand. She meant to pour it on His feet, which the attitude at table made easy to do; but before she can open it, her heart opens, and tears of thankfulness and sweet penitence rain down so abundantly as to wet His feet, inflicting an indignity when she had meant an honour. She has nothing at hand to

repair the fault, and so, with a touch she looses the hair, which it was shameful to let down in public, and, with the ingenuity and abasement of love, makes it a towel. Then, gaining confidence and carried farther than she had dared to intend, she lays her lips, sinful as they were, on His feet, as if asking pardon for the tears that would come, and only then applies the ointment, her only wealth. This woman that was "a sinner" and Judas are the only two recorded as having touched the Lord with their lips. Love may be bold even while penitent, and Jesus does not withdraw His foot from such a kiss.

Softer than silent, penitential tears,
Sweeter than nard upon His sacred feet,
Fell His dear pity on her shame and fears,
Calming the heart that once so wildly beat.
Oh, tender Saviour, how *Thy* heart was moved
Because so very, very much she loved!

I.

The Act of Forgiveness.

1. Forgiveness is an act of God—an act originative, antecedent, fertile. God must begin. This is the secret that burns through all the strong appeals of St. Paul and St. John as they reiterate their conviction that nothing of our own enters into the primary movement of our justification. No goodness at all of ours drew out a response from the co-operating favour of God. It was our badness, not our goodness, that drew it from Heaven. It was pity for our perishing that moved the Father to send His Son to save the world. "While we were yet weak, in due season Christ died for the ungodly." Not because we loved God, but because we could not love Him, did His love for us break out over us in His Son. God first loved us while still we loved sin rather than holiness, in order that, by loving us, He might restore to us the lost power of loving Him. The heat of His love alone it is that wakes up in our cold hearts the forgotten love for Him.

2. God makes forgiveness available by sending us His Son. Has He no forgiveness without the shedding of blood? Yes

indeed; He is ever ready, He has never ceased to be ready, to forgive. But His ready forgiveness is shut up, of melancholy necessity, within Himself. It can discover no way by which to enter, no point of attachment by which to lay hold. The love of God wanders round this bitter, inhospitable world, and can find no haven that is not barred.

Therefore it is that He sends His Son, in whom His forgiveness can find a road into the repellent earth, into this repugnant humanity. God's expelled forgiveness, as all other doors are bolted, will open a way for itself; as no man will admit it, it will itself become a man, that it may find admittance. God will forgive man in spite of man. God's forgiveness issues out of Heaven in the shape of a Man, wearing human flesh. Jesus Christ is the Forgiveness of the Father. The Father had already forgiven the world when He sent His Son to be born of the Virgin Mary, to be crucified under Pontius Pilate. The Son arrives, bringing with Him the pardon of the Father; and this pardon is effectual. For there is now in man one spot at least clean from defilement, on which the eyes of God's purity can afford to rest. There is now, amid the loveless herds of sinners, one Heart at any rate upon which the Father can risk the outpouring of His love; one Body, amid the hopeless and the faithless, and the diseased, which can admit the rushing power of the transfiguring Spirit.

¶ Just as a secret act of God's original energy underlies all our natural life—one act, prevenient, enduring, hidden—so a secret act of forgiveness, original, enduring, prevenient, underlies all our regenerate life. God spoke once, "Let us make man"; and lo, in the unending force of that fiat, we all are, we have our being. God spoke once in Christ, "Let us work out man's forgiveness"; and in the everlasting power of that one word, so spoken and done, the new race of the forgiven finds itself existing, the Church of the redeemed rises, grows, gathers, swarming upward out of some hidden will, as clouds that make and build themselves out of the very vacancy of air under the strong eye of the risen sun.[1]

3. Jesus gladly takes up the task assigned to Him. With Divine authority He says, "Thy sins are forgiven thee." He

[1] H. S. Holland, *Creed and Character*, 225.

approaches the fallen with a boundless sympathy, and draws them to Himself by the spiritual law of attraction. He came from an infinite height into this world, that He might be near sinners, able to touch them, and ready to be touched. It was to take their nature upon Him in the very likeness of sinful flesh, that they might feel Him closer still, and that He might not be ashamed to call them brethren. It was to become sin for them, though He knew no sin; that He might bear it, first by pity, then by sacrifice, and at last by pardon. This is the great and Godlike plan, the very heart of the reason why "He lifted up His feet to the long desolations," and touched the soil of our sin-stricken earth. And now He is only carrying out His grand plan in one of its applications when He draws the sinner near Him, and suffers her to clasp His feet that she may feel she is in contact with God's infinite and saving mercy. It is a ray of the glorious Sun of Righteousness, whose going forth is from the end of the heaven, and His circuit unto the ends of it, which He has made to glance into this woman's soul and to stray across this Pharisee's threshold, that men may be made to see how the Son of God came to win back their hearts, and may learn that, while He hates the sin, He loves the sinner with yearning, quenchless compassion. If the sinner's heart is ever gained, thus it must be, when He who in His character is "undefiled, separate from sinners" comes so close to them in sympathy, and stretches out a hand to them, stainless in purity, but filled with pardons. The Pharisee, when he sees it, sets it down as folly. But wisdom is justified of her children, and God "hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence," because He hath abounded "in the riches of his long-suffering."

Once in old Jerusalem
A woman kneeled at consecrated feet,
Kissed them, and washed them with her tears,
"What then?
I think that yet our Lord is pitiful:
I think I see the castaway e'en now!
And she is not alone: the heavy rain
Splashes without, and sullen thunder rolls,
But she is lying at the sacred feet
Of One transfigured.

"And her tears flow down,
Down to her lips—her lips that kiss the print
Of nails; and love is like to break her heart!
Love and repentance—for it still doth work
Sore in her soul to think, to think that she,
Even she, did pierce the sacred, sacred feet,
And bruise the thorn-crown'd head.

"O Lord, our Lord,
How great is Thy compassion!"[1]

4. Forgiveness comes first to us, who have nothing, not even love, to pay with, and it unlocks the flood-gates of the heart as nothing else will. We are not pardoned because we love, but we love because we are pardoned. We are pardoned because He loves us, and the knowledge of His forgiving love melts our hearts. Jesus seems here to teach us that there must be this experience of forgiveness before there is real and deep love. Certainly the principle involved in these words has been proved true in all the history of Christianity since they were spoken. Forms of Christianity which minimize sin, and have little to say about pardon, have always been, and always will be, cold and stagnant. The one power that set souls aflame with a holy and self-sacrificing love is the experience of God's pardoning mercy in Jesus Christ. The measure of our consciousness of forgiven sin will be the measure of our love.

She sat and wept beside His feet; the weight
Of sin oppress'd her heart; for all the blame,
And the poor malice of the worldly shame,
To her was past, extinct, and out of date,
Only the *sin* remain'd,—the leprous state;
She would be melted by the heat of love,
By fires far fiercer than are blown to prove
And purge the silver ore adulterate.
She sat and wept, and with her untress'd hair
Still wiped the feet she was so blest to touch;
And He wiped off the soiling of despair
From her sweet soul, because she loved so much.
I am a sinner, full of doubts and fears,
Make me a humble thing of love and tears.[2]

[1] Jean Ingelow. [2] Hartley Coleridge.

II

The Condition of Forgiveness.

1. Some would regard love as a condition of forgiveness. And they point to the text, "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much." Love is indeed the complement of faith. The expression "for she loved much" would seem to favour the view that love rather than faith is the saving grace. But the word "for" in this connexion is not causative but illative. Moreover Christ Himself says presently, "Thy faith hath saved thee." Faith and love—this is the logical and chronological order. For, as Tyndale said, "Faith is the mother of love."

¶ Faith is the first motion of the soul away from itself, away from its own interest and self-seeking, back to God the Mighty Giver. Faith, then, is the germ of love. Once let the current of the will be set running towards God in faith, and the whole force of the passionate soul of man will be drawn into the stream, will pour itself along the channel opened until it flows with the full, swelling flood of love. In faith, the eye of the soul looks away from itself: in love, the entire heart follows the direction of the eye. Faith must begin; there is no love without faith; the soul's motions remain locked, dammed, and barred, until faith gives them free opening.[1]

Were not those sweets, though humbly shed—
 That hair—those weeping eyes—
And the sunk heart that inly bled—
 Heaven's noblest sacrifice?

Thou that hast slept in error's sleep,
 Oh, wouldst thou wake in heaven,
Like Mary kneel, like Mary weep,
 "Love much," and be forgiven?[2]

2. The text confirms the teaching of the whole incident in reference to the human condition of forgiveness, which it plainly declares to be not love but faith. The order is first faith, which has for its under side the consciousness of sin and helplessness, and for its upper side trust in Jesus, the sin-bearer. On faith follows pardon, to which we contribute nothing, and which we have but to receive through our faith. To pardon received succeeds

[1] H. S. Holland. [2] Thomas Moore.

answering love, gratitude blended with penitence, all the deeper because we know ourselves forgiven. To such love are granted the acceptance of its poor offerings, a vindication against the sarcasms of cold critics, a confirmation of the pardon received already, and a calm peace, in which henceforward to abide and advance.

(1) How does faith save? It saves by bringing the soul into vital union with God. A railway train is standing on the line. The engine has full pressure of steam; the bell rings; the locomotive moves; but the carriages stand still. What is the trouble? The engine backs up and tries again, but with the same result. What is the trouble? The coupling has not been made. A link makes all the difference. There are foolish people who are acting thus all the while, trying to reach heaven without the coupling of faith. It is impossible. Faith is the *sine quâ non* because it brings us into oneness with God through our Mediator Christ Jesus, so that our destiny is bound up with His for ever and ever. When once we believe, our life is for evermore hid with Christ in God.

¶ The woman took Jesus at His word. Man though He was, somehow she felt that when He spoke God spoke, and that He could do as He said. She felt that this Man had the value of God. And, trusting Him, she felt in her soul the "rest" of God's forgiveness. And now

> The opening heavens around her shone
> With beams of sacred bliss.

Earth was Paradise Regained; freedom was hers and a clean soul, the peace of God entered her heart.[1]

> When God, the ever-living, makes
> His home in deathly winter frost,
> And God, the ever-loving, wakes
> In hardening eyes of woman lost,
> Then through the midnight moves a wraith:
> Open the door, for this is Faith.
>
> Open the door, and bring her in,
> And stir thy heart's poor fires that shrink.
> Oh, fear to see her pale and thin,
> Give love and dreams to eat and drink;
> For Faith may faint in wandering by—
> In that day thou shalt surely die.[2]

[1] G. S. Walker, *The Pictures of the Divine Artist*, 72. [2] Edward Ellis.

(2) Saving faith implies penitence. In the case of the sinful woman there was penitence too deep for words—the broken and contrite heart which God will not despise, a loathing of sin which this Pharisee cannot understand, and a glowing love which made his frown forgotten in the irresistible attraction to a Saviour's feet. What worlds of emotion may be passing within, where man cannot look, a bitterness of grief which the heart alone knows, and a joy with which no stranger can intermeddle! He knows it who is its Author and its End. He sees the birth of an immortal spirit, the glow and grandeur of a second creation better than the first, and welcomed with gladder songs. But all the while the poor Pharisee, in presence of its tokens, can understand it no more than he can hear the angels who rejoice over it; and he complacently charges with ignorance Him who searches the heart, and proudly condemns her who is being acquitted by the Judge of all!

¶ At the gateway of the Parthenon in Athens was an altar dedicated to Tears. No sacrifices were consumed, no votive offerings placed upon it; but the sorrowing bowed there and wept out their sorrows. It was the shadowing forth of a great truth; to wit, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Ps. li. 17). Dearer to God than all the *misereres* of the chanting Pharisees is the cry of the returning prodigal. He sees him bowed with penitence, and goes out to meet him while he is yet a great way off.[1]

(3) The deepest penitence does not imply the greatest sin. The highest degrees of sin-consciousness may be experienced by the man who is outwardly the most correct in conduct, and who has ever been,

> Thro' all this tract of years
> Wearing the white flower of a blameless life.

The greatest saint may know and feel himself to be "the chief of sinners." It is Paul—the man so conspicuously Christ-like, so unique in Christian excellence—who so characterizes himself. It is the Psalms of David—the man after God's own heart—that are so blotted with tears, and so vocal with sobs of distress and penitential prayers. It is that eminent saint, Francis of Assisi,

[1] D. J. Burrell, *Christ and Men*, 253.

of whom it is said that he wept so much over his sins that he injured his eyesight, and who, in reply to remonstrance, said: "I would rather choose to lose the sight of my body than to repress those tears by which the interior eyes are purified that they may see God." It was George Herbert who, when he lay dying, said: "I am sorry I have nothing to present to my merciful God but sin and misery, but the first is pardoned, and a few hours will put an end to the latter."

¶ One thing very remarkable during those last years must have struck all who conversed intimately with Erskine—his ever deepening sense of the evil of sin, and the personal way in which he took this home to himself. Small things done or said years ago would come back upon him and lie on his conscience, often painfully. Things which few other men would have ever thought of again, and which when told to others would seem trifling or harmless, were grievous to him in remembrance. "I know that God has forgiven me for these things," he would say, "but I cannot forgive myself."[1]

¶ There is no better test of spiritual growth than increasing sensitiveness to the repulsiveness of all kinds of sin, and deepening consciousness of the constant peril from it in which every human soul lives. In the greatest saint there are all the possibilities which, being worked out, make the greatest sinner; and the truer the saintliness the deeper the consciousness of this fact. The materials out of which heaven and hell are builded are found in every life, and the man who slowly builds heaven within him has constantly the terrible knowledge that he has only to put his hand forth in another direction in order to build hell; both are within reach.[2]

¶ Amos Barton, in George Eliot's *Scenes of Clerical Life*, had been an affectionate husband . . . but now that Milly was laid in the grave he re-lived all their life together, with that terrible keenness of memory and imagination which bereavement gives, and he felt as if his very love needed a pardon for its poverty and selfishness. What, then, must our love seem like when it is compared with the Love Divine? If any man will bring his life —even the best part of it—to the Light in which is no darkness at all, he will have enough discovered to be much forgiven.[3]

[1] Principal Shairp, in *Letters of Thomas Erskine of Linlathen*, 378.
[2] H. W. Mabie, *The Life of the Spirit*, 24.
[3] G. S. Walker, *The Pictures of the Divine Artist*, 79.

III.

The Peace of Forgiveness.

1. "Go in peace." The phraseology employed is not the ordinary phraseology of that familiar Old Testament leave-taking salutation which was the "good-bye" of the Hebrews—"Go in peace." But we read occasionally in the Old Testament a slight but eloquent variation. It is not "Go in peace," as our Authorized Version has it, but "Go into peace"; and that is a great deal more than the other. "Go in peace" refers to the momentary emotion; "Go into peace" seems, as it were, to open the door of a great palace, to let down the barrier on the borders of a land, and to send the person away upon a journey through all the extent of that blessed country. Jesus Christ takes up this as He does a great many very ordinary conventional forms, and puts a meaning into it. Eli had said to Hannah, "Go into peace." Nathan had said to David, "Go into peace." But Eli and Nathan could only wish that it might be so; their wish had no power to realize itself. Christ takes the water of the conventional salutation and turns it into the wine of a real gift. When He says "Go into peace," He puts the person into the peace which He wishes him, and His word is like a living creature, and fulfils itself.

2. We continue in peace by continuing in the life of faith. For peace, like pardon, is dependent on faith. If we would enjoy continuous peace, we must exercise continuous faith. The two things will cover precisely the same ground, and where the one stops the other will stop. Yesterday's faith does not secure to-day's peace. As long as I hold up the shield of faith, it will quench all the fiery darts of the wicked, but if I were holding it up yesterday and have dropped it to-day, then there is nothing between me and them, and I shall be wounded and burned before long. No past religious experience avails for present needs. If you would have your peace to be "as the waves of the sea," your trust in Christ must be continuous and strong. The moment you cease trusting, that moment you cease being peaceful. Keep behind the breakwater, and you will ride smoothly, whatever the

storm. Venture out beyond it, and you will be exposed to the dash of the waves and the howling of the tempest. Your own past tells you where the means of blessing are. It was your faith that saved you, and it is as you go on believing that you "go into peace."

3. The gift of peace does not carry with it exemption from life's struggle. But although the upper waters of the ocean may be brushed by the breeze, or even violently disturbed by the tempest, where the ocean is deep the depths are unmoved. Trust in God deepens the spiritual life; it carries it down into the heart of things. It is by it that duty loses a certain hardness which sometimes repels us, however much we acknowledge its dignity and its claim; it is by it that the varying experiences of life come to us with the real force of teaching. The past is no empty story for us, viewed only with regret; the present is no chance condition of things, to which we give no patient thought. We are sure that there is a Providence which has been ordering all things well, even though its purposes of love have sometimes been thwarted by our sins. And thus our trust deepens our repentances, makes our confessions more searching and sincere; or, even when we are dissatisfied with our confessions and repentances, enables us with loving confidence to feel sure that, as we know our intentions are right, all that is wanting will be supplied from the merits of our Master's Passion and from the treasures of His grace.

¶ Christian faith does not wriggle out of the responsibilities that attach to a human life, but it does bring in the thought of a mighty hand that guides and protects; and that itself brings calm and gladness. The advanced guard that had to be all eyes and ears is glad to slip into the rear, and let somebody else take the task of finding the path and looking out for the enemy. The officer that has had charge of the great ship as it ploughs its way through the stormy night feels a lightened burden when he comes down from the bridge, and knows that there is somebody else on the look-out. You fathers have got far more anxious faces than your little children have, because they trust, and you are responsible for them. And though it is no pillow for laziness, yet it is an anodyne for anxiety, when we remember that if our "believing" grasps God in Christ, it is His business to look after us; and we may leave ourselves in His hands. So there will

come stealing into the heart that trusts, just because it does trust, a strange calm like the centre in a cyclone, where there is absolute repose, and the sail hangs lank and straight in the windless air, however storms may rage madly all round about it.[1]

4. At the very moment when one would have thought it would do this woman good to be with the Lord for a little while longer, she is sent out into the harshly judging world. Yes, that is always the way by which Christian men and women who have received the blessing of salvation through faith can retain it, and serve Him—by going out among men and doing their work there. The woman went home. It was a home, if what they said about her was true, that sorely needed the leavening which she now would bring. She had been a centre of evil. She was to go away back to the very place where she had been such, and to be a centre of good. She was to contradict her past by her present, which would explain itself when she said she had been with Jesus. For the very same reason for which, to one man that besought to be with Him, begged that he might remain, He said, "No, no; go away home and tell your friends what great things God has done for you," He said to this woman, and He says to you and me, "Go, and witness for Me." Communion with Him is blessed, and it is meant to issue in service for Him.

¶ One day Brother Masseo said to St. Francis: "I wonder why the whole world runs after thee more than after others, and all men want to see thee and hear thee and obey thee? Thou art not fair of body, thou art not deeply learned, thou art not of noble birth—why does the whole world run after thee?" When St. Francis heard this, he rejoiced in his soul and turned his eyes to heaven, and stood a long time thus, with soul lifted up to God; and when he came to himself he kneeled down and gave thanks and praise to God, and turned to Brother Masseo and said to him with great spiritual power: "Do you wish to know why this happens to me? Do you wish to know why the whole world runs after me? For I knew that thing from the all-seeing God, whose eyes see the good and the bad over all the earth. For these most holy eyes have nowhere seen a greater, more miserable, poorer sinner than I; because in all the earth He has found no more wretched being to do His wonderful work, which He wishes to have done, therefore He has chosen me, so as thus to put to shame the noble, the great, strength and beauty, worldly wisdom,

[1] A. Maclaren.

that all may know that all power and all virtue come from Him and not from creatures, and that no one can exalt himself before His face; but he who praises himself, let him praise himself in the Lord, for His is the honour and the power for ever and ever."[1]

¶ If one reads a book like the Confessions of Saint Augustine, one sees what an intensely individualistic conception permeates it. The new light which breaks in upon him only enlightens him as to his relations with God, it does not arouse in him any impulse to the service of other men. It does not occur to him that to arrange comfortably and securely for one's own tranquillity and salvation, to have, so to speak, a private understanding with God, is in the least a selfish conception. It seems to Augustine the most natural thing in the world. Then that belief begins to alter insensibly, and the highest spirits begin to turn away in shame from a conception of religion which is merely a desire for moral security, a stoical ideal, a deliberate practising to become superior to pain and calamity by avoiding the desires and designs which are quenched and marred by suffering, an attempt at invulnerability. More and more do the highest spirits perceive that their duty is to the brotherhood of man; that there is much preventible sorrow and misery in the world, and that their work is to persuade men to prevent it.[2]

[1] J. Jörgensen, *St. Francis of Assisi*, 74.
[2] A. C. Benson, *Thy Rod and Thy Staff*, 140.

The Good Samaritan.

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The Good Samaritan.

And Jesus said unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.—Luke x. 37.

The story of the good Samaritan is one of our Lord's greatest and most typical parables. It is so simple that a child can read its meaning; yet it is in truth a treatise on practical ethics more profound in thought and more powerful in effect than any other in the world. Is it too much to say that in these few verses there is contained the essential truth of man's relations with his fellow-men? Our very familiarity with the parable blinds us to the greatness of its mingled simplicity and depth and—let us add—to the greatness of the claim which it makes upon us.[1]

¶ As we grow older and as things change around us, the old becomes ever new. We look upon the record from a different point of sight, and the parts group themselves together in new combinations. We look upon it in a new light, and what perhaps we had not noticed before grows radiant with unexpected brightness. It is so with the parable now before us. I suppose that we can never read it thoughtfully without finding some fresh power in it to meet new circumstances; and at the same time the central truths of the Divine narrative always rise sharp and clear before us to crown each special lesson which it supplies.[2]

In order to understand the parable we must first of all understand the question with which the lawyer came to Jesus and His reply. Then will follow the truths taught in the parable itself. When we understand the parable we shall see the meaning and feel the force of the exhortation contained in the text.

[1] Archbishop C. G. Lang, *The Parables of Jesus*, 123.
[2] Bishop B. F. Westcott, *Village Sermons*, 342.

I.

The First Question and its Answer.

The lawyer put two questions to Christ. The first question he came for the purpose of asking, the second he found himself compelled to ask.

1. Christ was in Capernaum. And while He was there a certain lawyer stood up and tempted Him, saying, "Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" This lawyer was not a lawyer in our acceptation of the name; he was a man versed in the precepts and ceremonies of the Mosaic law, and also in the commandments and traditions with which meddling priests and scribes had thickly incrusted that law until it became a burden too heavy to be borne. He stood up before the Saviour to tempt Him. The word clearly shows—for its meaning is always a bad one in the New Testament—that his aim was not to elicit truth but to lay a trap for Christ, to entangle Him in His talk. He was a type of the captious critic, whom you can still find in every street and lane of the city. Nothing could be more solemn and profound than his question; and nothing more unseemly and self-defeating than the spirit in which it was propounded.

¶ He who came to sneer may have departed to pray. Many an incautious seeker has found more than he really sought. The light of conviction has broken in upon men who were not even honest in their doubt. Paul was never more furious against Jesus than on the day of his conversion. More than one scoffer has gone to church to ridicule his wife's religion and has gone home to beseech his wife's God for mercy. One of the most remarkable preachers of early Methodism was converted at a meeting which he attended solely for the purpose of breaking it up. He meant to drive out the preacher, but the truth hooked in his soul. Contest against truth is never hopeful. The keenest blade is soft metal against the "sword of the Spirit." God is a terrible antagonist. So, however bitter or cynical the spirit of this lawyer may have been, I am confident he carried away in his soul the barb of conviction.[1]

(1) The question is one which has been asked many times, springing to the heart and to the lips of many people, distressed,

[1] G. C. Peck, *Vision and Task*, 259.

perhaps, by the consciousness of wrong, or lifted up perhaps to catch, as it were, the faint murmurs of some more beautiful world in some more beautiful time; or perhaps in the hour in which, conscious of the transitoriness of this life and the hateful persistence of material things, we have asked whether it is possible for us to take hold of some abiding vitality which will remain with us among the perishing things of this world.

The answer of Christ was in the form of a question, the best form in most cases where the motive of the inquirer lacks genuineness and reality. "What is written in the law? how readest thou?" Here was a lawyer, who read the law, studied the law, expounded the law, and he was sent to the law for an answer to his query. "How readest thou?" There seems to have been no hesitation in his reply. With wonderful coolness he gives the condensed summary and essence of the moral law, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself."

(2) The man's question was far too urgent and important to be dealt with merely by describing what would be intellectually in harmony with the question at issue, and therefore Jesus Christ immediately made an appeal to the man's conscience. He said: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God"; then said Jesus Christ: "That is right; this do, go on doing this, and thou shalt live." That is the appeal to the conscience.

¶ When we were leaving Liverpool, after my father's death, I went with my mother, as she wished to bid "Good-bye" to Dr. McNeile. As we were leaving, my mother mentioned that I was to be ordained before long. "Oh!" he said, "I wish I had known that." Then, coming near to me, he laid his hand upon my shoulder, and he said, "At first you will think that you can do everything, then you will be tempted to think that you can do nothing; but don't let yourself be cast down: you will learn that you can do what God has for you to do."[1]

2. Christ has touched the man's conscience; He has pricked the side of his moral sense, and you will see the indication of that in a moment. What is the refuge—the almost continuous refuge—of those whose consciences are just slightly disturbed? The

[1] Bishop Boyd Carpenter, *Some Pages of My Life*, 117.

refuge usually is a resort to a dialectical argument, and therefore the man immediately begins to enter into an argument. He wishes now to raise a side-issue, and he asks: "Who is my neighbour?"

(1) Here is a question which might be debated for days, for years, and yet not be fully answered, for it was exactly one of those questions which were so dear to those who in the Jewish world were anxious to make out that the privileges of Israel still existed. It is written: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour"; but "if all the Gentiles should fall into the sea you are not bound to draw them forth, for these are not thy neighbours"—that was the idea of the Jew. Therefore the question of what was the line of demarcation, the line of locality, or blood, or personality, or geographical or racial claim that constituted the difference between the man who was a neighbour and the man who was not a neighbour—those were the little dialectical questions which delighted the Jewish mind; and so the man, feeling that Christ has winged a shaft right into his conscience, begins immediately to turn the flank of the argument, as it were, and to enter upon a dialectical discussion. It is the refuge of the stricken conscience which wishes to evade that which is brought straight before the moral sense. This is the next step. When Jesus Christ perceives that He has stricken this man's conscience, and that he does not realize that the real difficulty of his life is that he has had magnificent theories which as yet have not been fully translated into action, then, knowing that the man's conscience is awake, He begins to strike for the man's heart.

(2) In answer to his second question, "Who is my neighbour?" Christ told him the parable of the good Samaritan. Now consider the deep principle of human conduct—we might almost call it the philosophy of life—which the parable contains. We discover the clue to it when we notice that the parable does not answer the lawyer's question. The question was: "Who is my neighbour?" The parable tells what it is to be neighbourly. It seems to be a case of logical *non sequitur*. In fact, it is a case of the truth which is deeper than logic. Our Lord could not teach the truth by answering the question. For the question itself was wrong; it revealed a wrong temperament of mind. It was facing not truth but fundamental error; to follow it would therefore have

been to lose the truth. The lawyer, steeped in all the traditions and instincts of his class, wanted our Lord to give him a clear and precise definition of his neighbour; to mark him out, and set him apart from the general mass of mankind. But definition means limitation. If our Lord had said, "This man is your neighbour," the inference in the lawyer's mind would have been, "Then that other is not my neighbour; I need not concern myself with him; I can pass him by." But this conclusion would have been the very error which Jesus came to banish. He could put the man right only by declining to answer the question; by taking him to a wholly different standpoint, and making him start there, namely—"Be in your own spirit neighbourly, and then every man will be your neighbour."

¶ In our religious and moral difficulties we throw out some question as a sort of challenge, persuading ourselves that it is really decisive. Often it remains unanswered. We are disappointed, discomfited. Under such failure of their self-chosen test questions, men often give up their faith or surrender their moral struggle. But, apart from the petulance, the impetuosity, or the effort to "justify oneself" which a little honest self-scrutiny would often discover in our questions, and which are sufficient to deprive them of any right to an answer, God's wisdom may see that they spring from a wrong attitude of mind, that they are not facing the line of truth, and therefore may refuse to answer them. But all the while in some other way, at the moment perhaps not discerned, He may be leading us to the truth. While our mind remains a blank as to that particular difficulty which we thought of such crucial importance, He may be bringing some other truth before us, or shaping our lives by some special experience, so that after a time we shall find, perhaps without knowing how, that that old question has been answered in some other way, or has been proved futile or superfluous.[1]

There are, who darkling and alone,
Would wish the weary night were gone,
Though dawning day should only show
The secret of their unknown woe;
Who pray for sharpest throbs of pain
To ease them of doubt's galling chain:
"Only disperse the cloud," they cry,
"And if our fate be death, give light and let us die."

[1] C. G. Lang.

Unwise I deem them, Lord, unmeet
To profit by Thy chastenings sweet,
For Thou wouldst have us linger still
Upon the verge of good or ill,
That on Thy guiding hand unseen
Our individual hearts may lean,
And this our frail and foundering bark
Glide in the narrow wake of Thy beloved ark,

So be it, Lord; I know it best,
Though not as yet this wayward breast
Beat quite in answer to Thy voice;
Yet surely I have made my choice:
I know not yet the promised bliss,
Know not if I shall win or miss;
So doubting, rather let me die,
Than close with aught beside, to last eternally.[1]

II.

The Lessons of the Parable.

The road from Jerusalem to Jericho, which nature has blasted with sterility, Christ has refreshed with a tale of the most delicious humanity. That tale, if regarded merely as a picture of the time—as painting with a few strokes its most marked forms of character, and distributing their genuine colours over its peculiar prejudices, vices and miseries, possesses inimitable beauty. There is the Priest, whom we are accustomed to see amid the stir of Jerusalem—the very model of pompous piety, the master of sanctimonious ceremonies, beating his breast in the market-place, and stretching forth his hands at the corners of the streets, the scrupulous adviser of the people's conscience. We are invited to see him on the solitary ride. His back turned to the metropolis, he is a saint no more; he performs no charities among the hills; delivered from the public eye, he breaks loose from the moralities of life and the reverence of God. There is the Levite, a kind of menial of the sacerdotal order, whose conduct towards "him that fell among thieves" is true to his usual mimicry of the priests, with whose interests his own are interwoven, and whose habits and hypocrisy he copies to the life. And there is the Samaritan

[1] John Keble, *The Christian Year.*

—half foreigner, half apostate, and more wholly outcast than if he had been idolater downright—the object of irritating historical recollection, the living memorial of captivity and schism, the centre of a hate both national and religious. With no office, or dignified caste, like the others, to protect him from peril by their sanctity, but traversing a hostile country, he stops to bind the wounds of a stranger.

¶ No one has made the "Good Samaritan" so real to the soul's eye as Watts in his picture of that name. It ceases to be a parable; it becomes a vivid incident of daily life. The naked, dead-alive condition of the Jew who had fallen among thieves, clinging with a despairing grip to the supporting arm of the stranger who has come at the last extremity to his help; the benevolent face of that stranger and alien—so full of pity, so capable to save, so prompt to interpose, could not possibly have been presented in a more graphic way; while the lonely, desolate region, half-way between Jerusalem and Jericho, is depicted with a magic touch which adds immensely to the pathos of the scene. The whole story is seen as by a lightning flash, and it makes its appeal to the heart in a manner which cannot be resisted. "Go, and do thou likewise" is felt with irresistible power by every one who gazes upon that moving sight, and the selfishness that would make one pass by on the other side, and disclaim all connexion with a human brother in distress, whose creed and conditions of life are different from ours, becomes impossible.[1]

A Priest and Levite both passed by,
Sent out perchance, to vainly try
To do some good, in fashion high,
Upon the road to Jericho.
But praises of Jerusalem
A wounded sinner would condemn.
This fallen soul was not for them,
Nor journeys down to Jericho.

Their words he would not understand,
Their solemn priestly reprimand.
He needed but a helping hand
Upon the road to Jericho.
So both passed by on the other side.
But soon, a man who dare not chide
Came by, then stopped to save and guide
This traveller to Jericho.

[1] Hugh Macmillan, *Life-Work of George Frederic Watts*, 163.

He helped him up; he cheered him on;
He bound his bruises one by one;
And ere the daylight quite was gone
Their backs were turned to Jericho.
And still the good Samaritan,
With friendly words, as man to man,
And deeds which mercy far outran,
Stayed him who'd go to Jericho.

Oh, more than ritualistic power,
To guard and help in danger's hour,
When clouds of sin and trouble lower
Upon the road to Jericho,
Is th' good Samaritan's command.
And may we all well understand
The value of this friendly hand,
Should *we* go down to Jericho.[1]

1. *Religious profession and service have no necessary connexion with real goodness.*—This lesson gleams through the whole narrative. Here, for example, we have two Jews, both of them occupying official positions in the Temple worship and service, and yet neither of them possessed of the common sympathies of humanity, but both of them capable of seeing a fellow-mortal in suffering, extreme and possibly fatal, without devising for him any succour. Where should pity have been found if not in a priest of the Most High God? What did his very priesthood signify? In what had it its birth? Was he not a symbolic mediator between God and men? Had he not to deal with a service which culminated in a mercy-seat? A true priesthood implies a compassionate and forgiving God. A true priest was taken from among the people that he might have compassion on the ignorant and on them that were out of the way. As the representative of Him who pities the distressed, and whose tender mercies are over all His works, it was natural to expect that he would have succoured the pillaged and bleeding traveller. But it is clear that men may have much to do with religious service and have nothing to do with religion.

¶ The deadening influence of mere officialism was so keenly felt and feared by the Apostle Paul that he roused into activity

[1] M. A. B. Evans, *The Moonlight Sonata*, 45.

every energy of his nature that he might vanquish it. He was an apostle, but he was fearful lest he should forget that he was a man. He had to blow the trumpet, and summon others to the battle with self and sin, but he was apprehensive lest he should neglect his own soul; and hence, with stirring earnestness and subduing pathos, he says, "I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."[1]

¶ Professor D. B. Towner, who was associated with Mr. Moody for the last fourteen years of his life, says: "After his meetings in Oakland, Cal., in the spring of 1899, when I accompanied him as a singer, we took the train for Santa Cruz. We were hardly seated when in came a party of young men, one of whom was considerably under the influence of liquor and very badly bruised, with one eye completely closed and terribly discoloured. He at once recognized Mr. Moody, and began to sing hymns and talk very loudly for his benefit. Mr. Moody caught up his bag and said, 'Towner, let us get out of this.' When I reminded him that the other car was full, he settled down, protesting that the company should not allow a drunken man to insult the whole car in such a manner. Presently the conductor came, and Mr. Moody called his attention to the poor fellow in the rear of the car. The conductor attended to his duty, and when he reached the young man he said a few words to him in a low voice, and the fellow followed him into the baggage car, where he bathed his eye and bound it up with his handkerchief, after which the young man soon fell asleep. Mr. Moody sat musing for a time, and then said, 'Towner, that is an awful rebuke to me. I preached against Pharisaism last night to a crowd, and exhorted them to imitate the Good Samaritan; and now this morning God has given me an opportunity to practise what I preached, and I find I have both feet in the shoes of the priest and Levite.' He was reticent all the way to Santa Cruz, but he told the incident that night to the audience, confessing his humiliation."[2]

2. *Men may be neighbours though of different religious beliefs.*—Our Lord does not say that to be neighbourly a man must be of the Jewish religion, or of the Samaritan religion, or of any other religion. The Priest and the Levite were very religious; but, in spite of their religion, they were grossly unneighbourly. Not-

[1] E. Mellor, *The Hem of Christ's Garment*, 185.
[2] W. R. Moody, *The Life of Dwight L. Moody*, 439.

withstanding their high religious rank, they were as cold and heartless as the most blatant infidel could be. On the other hand, the Samaritan was neighbourly, not because he was a religious man, but right in the teeth of his religious teaching. The best Samaritan lover of God, according to his creed, was the best Samaritan hater of the religion of his neighbours in Judæa; just as among ourselves, the most approved Protestant is by some thought to be the most bitter anti-Catholic demonstrator.

¶ A clergyman wrote to me, "I am a Calvinist; belief in the Incarnation appears to me indispensable to salvation, and to my recognition of any one as a child of God. But I confess that the enormous difficulty of at least apparent facts staggers me; one of the most perfect characters I know is an aged Unitarian lady; but then are there not most exemplary people to be found who deny all Christianity in every shape and form? The more I think of it the more perplexed I am."[1]

¶ Some time ago, dismasted and waterlogged on the boundless sea, a barque had drifted about, until it was one thousand miles from any land, and all hope of relief had died out from the minds of her starving crew. The cry, "A ship! a ship!" roused the dying energies of the men, and at once shawls and shirts on the ends of oars and boat-hooks were waved as signals of distress. The stranger vessel changed her course and bore down upon the miserable wreck. The wretched sufferers tried with united voice to send a cry of welcome over the waves, and when they recognized their country's flag they rejoiced at the sure prospect of relief. We cannot realize what they felt as help drew near, after having for days anticipated an awful death, but still less can we imagine their awful revulsion of feeling, and the howl of despair which rent the air, when the vessel, sailing near enough to see the ghastly wretches in their destitute condition, stayed in its course, tacked about, and sailed away, leaving them to their fate. Nor was this all; the same thing had been done by another vessel previously, which also bore their country's flag and colours. So they endured the tortures of Tantalus, and abandoned themselves to despair. When death had thinned their numbers, and all were laid helpless, suddenly, by God's pity, a Norwegian vessel sailed across their path. Compassion filled the hearts of the foreign sailors, and tender succour was afforded them. Nor was it until the last survivor had been carried on board the ship that they left the wreck to drift away, a derelict coffin, with its unburied dead.[2]

[1] J. Martineau, *National Duties*, 184.

[2] W. J. Townsend.

3. *Need is the measure of neighbourliness.*—Max Müller said that to the Greek every man not speaking Greek was a barbarian; to the Jew every man not circumcised was a Gentile; to the Muhammadan every man not believing in the prophet of Arabia was an infidel. "It was Christianity that struck the word 'barbarian' from the dictionaries of mankind and replaced it with the word 'brother.'" Under the influence of the teaching and spirit of Christ we are coming to see that all men everywhere are neighbours, and that it is open to us to do something to help the wounded pilgrim on life's highway.

¶ Longfellow spoke of his feelings at a banquet when so many were in the outer darkness and in direst need. He spoke of the poverty-stricken millions who challenge our wine and bread; and impeach us all as traitors, the living and the dead.

And whenever I sit at the banquet,
Where the feast and song are high,
Amid the mirth and the music
I can hear that awful cry.

And hollow and haggard faces,
Look into the lighted hall,
And wasted hands are extended
To catch the crumbs that fall.

For within there is light and plenty,
And odours fill the air;
And without there is cold and darkness,
And hunger and despair.[1]

¶ We cannot read John Woolman's *Journal* without seeing how—to use his own quaint and beautiful phraseology—he was "baptized into a feeling sense of all conditions." His sympathies knew neither barrier nor boundary. His devotion braced itself to the expenditure of any energy and the endurance of any sacrifice. Wherever he discovered a weary and oppressed man or woman, he recognized his neighbour and his brother. Whatever he could do for these forlorn and broken travellers, lying wounded by the wayside of life and forgotten by the majority who passed by, was done cheerfully, unpretentiously, graciously. "In Pharais," Fiona Macleod tells us—and *Pharais* is Celtic for Paradise—"there are no tears shed, though in the remotest part of it there is a grey

[1] A. McLean, *Where the Book Speaks*, 83.

pool, the weeping of all the world, fed everlastingly by the myriad eyes that every moment are somewhere wet with sorrow, or agony, or vain regret, or vain desire. And those who go there stoop, and touch their eyelids with that grey water, and it is as balm to them, and they go healed of their too great joy; and their songs thereafter are the sweetest that are sung in the ways of Pharais." This was the paradise in which John Woolman sojourned through all his fifty years of life. He was always stooping and touching his eyelids with the grey water. His pity overleaped the fences and trammels which hem ours in.[1]

(1) Martineau denies that we are bound to be neighbourly to those who are in need. He says, "We are under no obligation to love as ourselves the selfish, the malignant, the depraved. Such are not our neighbours, but occupy the same position with respect to us as the Priest and the Levite in the parable, from whom, it is plain, Jesus withheld the appellation. That Christian morality is hostile to personal resentment, that it softens the irritations of natural passion by the memory of our common nature and common immortality, that it so lifts the eye above the little orbit of our earthly life that we may serenely study its seeming disorders, that it so enfolds us in consciousness of universal providence that nothing can seem totally deranged in the affairs of men, is perfectly true; but it does not stifle, it rather quickens our moral indignation and aversion against wrong; and while it disposes us to patient and practical exertion for the debased, while it creates for us new moral obligations towards them, which no other religion ever recognized, it yet renders the sentiment of interior affection for them more unattainable than ever. In spite of all the refinements of a sentimental morality, it is impossible to separate in our regard the agent and the act; disgust at intemperance is disgust at the intemperate; aversion to hypocrisy is aversion to the hypocrite; indignation at tyranny is indignation at the tyrant. That honour, which, for the sake of our universal Father, is due to all men, that respect which, in consideration of its great futurity, is to be rendered to every human soul, and that promptitude of beneficent effort which, in hope of abating misery, must be ready for every occasion, are never to be withheld from natures the most lost; but emotion of love like that which springs upward to God, the affection which even our self-respect must not be permitted

[1] Alexander Smellie, in Introduction to *The Journal of John Woolman*, xxiii.

to exceed, is too holy to be squandered on any but those who bear on them the signature of Divine approval."[1]

(2) But on the other hand let us hear what Dr. Whyte has to say: "It has been said of Goethe that, like this Priest and this Levite, he kept well out of sight of stripped and wounded and half-dead men. I hope it is not true of that great intellectual man. At any rate it is not true of Jesus Christ. For He comes and He goes up and down all the bloody passes of human life, actually looking for wounded and half-dead men, and for none else, till He may well bear the name of The one and only entirely Good and True Samaritan. They are here to whom He has said it and done it. 'When I passed by thee, and saw thee wounded and half-dead, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live. Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was a time of love. Then washed I thee with water, and I anointed thee with oil.' And we ourselves are the proof of it."[2]

O Christ the Life, look on me where I lie
Ready to die:
O Good Samaritan, nay, pass not by.

O Christ, my Life, pour in Thine oil and wine
To keep me Thine;
Me ever Thine, and Thee for ever mine.

Watch by Thy saints and sinners, watch by all
Thy great and small:
Once Thou didst call us all,—O Lord, recall.

Think how Thy saints love sinners, how they pray
And hope alway,
And thereby grow more like Thee day by day.

O Saint of saints, if those with prayer and vow
Succour us now. . . .
It was not they died for us, it was Thou.[3]

[1] J. Martineau, *National Duties*, 183.
[2] A. Whyte, *Our Lord's Characters*, 237.
[3] Christina G. Rossetti, *Verses*, 207.

4. *Neighbourliness means sacrifice.*—It is not difficult to imagine that the priest who passed the wounded man so heartlessly might say to himself, "Poor man! he has been roughly handled by some highwaymen, but he has not long to live now, that is clear, and he might as well die where he is as anywhere else." Or he might say: "Ah! this is a pitiable case; but really it is not the place for any man to linger in; and if I encumber myself with the care of him, the robbers, who may even now be hiding beneath some bush or behind some rock, may swoop like vultures down on me, and make of me another victim." Or he might say: "I am anxious to get home, and if I charge myself with the duty of taking this poor man to Jericho, it will greatly retard my progress." All of which means that he would have been neighbour to him that fell among thieves if it had cost him nothing—if it had left untouched his time, his comfort, and his ease. And there are thousands who would be neighbours on the same easy conditions, but such is not the spirit which our Saviour commends. The man who would be a follower of the good Samaritan must be one who is endowed with the spirit of sacrifice.

¶ January 23rd, 1827.—Slept ill, not having been abroad these eight days. Then a dead sleep in the morning, and when the awakening comes, a strong feeling how well I could dispense with it for once and forever. This passes away, however, as better and more dutiful thoughts arise in my mind. I know not if my imagination has flagged; probably it has; but at least my powers of labour have not diminished during the last melancholy week. . . . Wrote till twelve A.M., finishing half of what I call a good day's work—ten pages of print, or rather twelve. Then walked in Princes Street pleasure-ground with Good Samaritan James Skene, the only one among my numerous friends who can properly be termed *amicus curarum mearum*, others being too busy or too gay, and several being estranged by habit.[1]

III.

The Exhortation.

Now look more narrowly at the words of the text. Their exposition is the story which precedes, with its circumstances and its lessons.

[1] *Journal of Sir Walter Scott*, 90.

"And Jesus said unto him, Go, and do thou likewise." This is the only human example commended to us. In what the Samaritan did our Lord saw no flaw. The Samaritan is for all times the model neighbour. What was it in the conduct of the Samaritan that won from our Lord this unique eulogium? It was the all-round love of a neighbour. He gave time, service, money's worth, money. He gave everything. He kept back nothing. He grudged nothing. The Samaritan's benevolence was all-rounded. He by the wayside had no further claim upon the Samaritan than this—he was a man.

1. Thus we have, first of all, an encouragement to a life of service like the Samaritan's. Consider the character of this service.

(1) It is *unselfish*.—There is a compassion which is selfish; and it is very common. Its motive sometimes is the indulgence of sentiment. The sentiment of compassion like other natural emotions craves satisfaction. It is really selfish when its primary motive is to satisfy itself rather than the need of its recipient. The charity which relieves itself by giving an alms to any beggar who asks, without thought or care for his real need, which does not consider that that alms may be a means of encouraging thriftlessness and imposture, may be thus a cruel wrong both to the beggar himself and to the really deserving poor; the charity which, moved by some sentimental appeal, takes no trouble to see whether that appeal is true to facts, or likely to do more harm than good—this charity is fundamentally false; it is a form of self-indulgence. Or, again, the motive may be one's own spiritual good. To give an alms as a means of relieving one's conscience, or of acquiring credit in the eyes of God, is really a selfish act. It is not admirable, it is merely pitiable, to see the crowds of beggars at some church door in Italy, maintained in beggary rather than lifted out of it, encouraged to trade in the apparatus of misery, by the alms of the faithful. True charity, true neighbourliness, considers first not the indulgence of sentiment or the satisfaction of conscience, but the true need of the poor. And it has come to pass, through the abuse of charity, that the true need of the poor is often best served by withholding, not giving, the heedless and casual dole.

¶ It is simply and sternly impossible for the English public, at this moment, to understand any thoughtful writing, — so incapable of thought has it become in its insanity of avarice. Happily, our disease is, as yet, little worse than this incapacity of thought; it is not corruption of the inner nature; we ring true still when anything strikes home to us; and though the idea that everything should "pay" has infected our every purpose so deeply, that even when we would play the Good Samaritan, we never take out our twopence and give them to the host without saying, "When I come again thou shalt give me fourpence," there is a capacity of noble passion left in our heart's core.[1]

(2) It is *thorough*.—The service of the good Samaritan was thoroughgoing. We modern Samaritans reflect that the inn stands hard by, where this patient can get every attention, and that it must be his own fault if he does not go there; so we ride on with the comforting conclusion that "so much is being done for people of that class." The ancient Samaritan did not pause to think whether he would soil his hands or stain his saddle. He understood that the rights of property must give way before the claims of necessity. His beast was "his own" no longer; for the time being it belonged to the man who was half dead. Here is the Christian law of possession. The thieves had said, "All thine is ours," and had snatched it violently. The Samaritan says, "All mine is thine," and yields it generously; because—as Philip Sidney said when he gave up his cup of cold water to the dying soldier—"Thy necessity is greater than mine."

¶ "Some years ago I lay ill in San Francisco, an obscure journalist, quite friendless. Stevenson, who knew me slightly, came to my bedside and said, "I suppose you are like all of us, you don't keep your money. Now, if a little loan, as between one man of letters and another—eh?" This to a lad writing rubbish for a vulgar sheet in California!"[2]

(3) It is *personal*.—The service which the Samaritan rendered was personal. He himself bound up the wounds, himself set the stranger on his own beast, himself brought him to the inn and took care of him. Charity is always incomplete unless it involves this element of personal service. We have become too much accustomed to acting the neighbour by deputy. We give

[1] Ruskin, *Sesame and Lilies* (*Works*, i. 31).

[2] Quoted from *The Times* by Graham Balfour in *Life of R. L. Stevenson*, ii. 40.

money: we leave it to others to give personal service. Of course, to a large extent this is a necessity of modern life; and we can keep even this second-hand charity at least in touch with true principles if we take pains to follow our money with personal interest and sympathy. But we must never be satisfied with this. No amount of subscriptions can compensate for this want of the touch of person with person; of heart reaching heart; of will encouraging and strengthening will. Each one of us ought to be able to think at once of some individual or family in the ranks of the poor, the sick, the distressed, whom by personal thought and care and act we are trying to comfort and cheer and raise.

¶ "What is to be done for the unsaved masses?" Mr. Moody asked while in Sheffield. In answering his own inquiry, he said that he had found a spiritual famine in England such as he had never dreamed of. "Here, for instance, in this town of Sheffield," he said, "I am told that there are one hundred and fifty thousand people who not only never go near a place of worship, but for whom there is actually no church accommodation provided, even if they were willing to take advantage of it. It seems to me, if there be upon God's earth one blacker sight than these thousands of Christless and graceless souls, it is the thousands of dead and slumbering Christians living in their very midst, rubbing shoulders with them every day upon the streets, and never so much as lifting up a little finger to warn them of death and eternity and judgment to come. Talk of being sickened at the sight of the world's degradation, ah! let those of us who are Christian hide our faces because of our own, and pray God to deliver us from the guilt of the world's blood. I believe that if there is one thing which pierces the Master's heart with unutterable grief, it is not the world's iniquity but the Church's indifference." He then argued that every Christian man and woman should feel that the question was not one for ministers and elders and deacons alone, but for them as well. "It is not enough," he said, "to give alms; personal service is necessary. I may hire a man to do *some* work, but I can never hire a man to do *my* work. Alone before God I must answer for that, and so must we all."[1]

2. Lay emphasis on the necessity of *doing*—"go, and *do* thou likewise." Which of us has never allowed sensibility of feeling to pass muster with his conscience in the place of merciful action?

[1] W. R. Moody, *The Life of Dwight L. Moody*, 195.

The glow which warms our hearts when we are roused by a tale of oppression, or shed a tear over another's woe, is so like the comfort of a self-approving conscience when a duty has been done that we need reminding roughly that in Heaven's chancery fine feeling counts for nothing; that it is precious only so far as it leads to noble action; that the sensibility which ends where it began makes inaction more inexcusable; that

> Faith's meanest deed more favour wears
> Where lives and hearts are weighed
> Than keenest feelings, choicest prayers,
> Which bloom their hour and fade.

Action is the test of feelings. The pity raised in us by the sight of suffering must pass into the prompt energy which relieves it before we can claim a place in that noble army typified by the Good Samaritan.

¶ Shall I tell you what I saw the other day? It made me laugh, and yet it made me sad. I saw, in one of your parks, a poor little ragged boy, who was evidently hungry, and who was anxious to appeal successfully to the pity of the public. He was met by a tall, lean, clean man, who set his long, bony fingers together stiffly and impressively, and lectured the child in very suitable language. I overheard him say, "This is not proper. You ought to have been at school; you should not be prowling about here in this way; there are places provided for such as you, and I earnestly advise you to get away from this course of life." Every word he said was grammatically correct, and socially very true. As he was delivering his frosty lecture to the poor lad, there came a boy—a school-boy hastening to school—who was carrying a large lump of bread and butter in his hand, while he was eating as only school-boys can eat; and when he saw the poor ragged child, he pulled his bread and butter in two, put one half into the boy's hand, and went on. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven." That boy who gave his bread and butter away will stand a better chance than the ninety-nine legally upright, who apparently need no repentance![1]

3. Finally lay stress on the *example*—"go, and do thou *likewise*"—for here lies the moral of the whole. School and train the sensibility and tenderness of heart which God has given to you

[1] Joseph Parker.

into the practice of active mercy towards those who stand in need of it! Do, by ready and ungrudging bounty if God has blessed you with affluence; in any case by active kindness towards the sick and sorrowing and helpless who shall cross your path, strive in some small measure to pay back to Christ His own unspeakable compassion upon you! For the one prevision of earth's final judgment let fall by Him in talk with His disciples measures acceptance or rejection, weal or woe, the right hand or the left, not by Godward consciousness, integrity of conduct, purity of life, but solely by the loving succour extended to the wounded on life's way, to the suffering, the needy, the forlorn, imaged in whom He saw, and commanded them to see, Himself.

¶ This day last year Livingstone died—a Scotchman and a Christian, loving God and his neighbour, in the heart of Africa. "Go thou and do likewise!"—Mackay's Diary, Berlin, May 4th, 1874.[1]

Have you had a kindness shown?
Pass it on;
'Twas not given for thee alone,
Pass it on;
Let it travel down the years,
Let it wipe another's tears,
Till in heav'n the deed appears—
Pass it on.

Did you hear the loving word?
Pass it on;
Like the singing of a bird?
Pass it on;
Let its music live and grow,
Let it cheer another's woe;
You have reaped what others sow,
Pass it on.

'Twas the sunshine of a smile,
Pass it on;
Staying but a little while!
Pass it on;
April beam, the little thing,
Still it makes the flow'rs of spring,
Makes the silent birds to sing—
Pass it on.

[1] *Mackay of Uganda*, 10.

Have you found the heav'nly light?
Pass it on;
Souls are groping in the night,
Daylight gone;
Hold thy lighted lamp on high,
Be a star in some one's sky,
He may live who else would die—
Pass it on.

Be not selfish in thy greed,
Pass it on;
Look upon thy brother's need,
Pass it on;
Live for self, you live in vain;
Live for Christ, you live again;
Live for Him, with Him you reign—
Pass it on.

The One Thing Needful.

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The One Thing Needful.

But one thing is needful: for Mary hath chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.—Luke x. 42.

1. An unending interest broods over this story. We return to it again and again, finding fresh lessons in it every time. Martha and Mary are sisters to whom every reader of the Lord's life is drawn. In a certain way we feel grateful to them. They opened their home to the Lord when others cast Him out. They believed in Him; they ministered to Him; they worshipped Him. Yet to many readers they are a perplexing study. The one seems to exhibit a life ideal and spiritual; the other a life care-filled and worldly. It is a contrast which everybody feels to be painful; against which we all, at one time or another, have uttered our silent protest. Yet it continues to be felt. The two sisters have come to be looked upon as types of contrasted life rather than living beings—types vague and conventional, mere figures in an old story, portraits of which the true features are effaced, the legend over the one being a word of praise, under the other a word of blame.

But the memory of the two women was not preserved in the Gospels to be a perplexity, or a contrast, or a mere mist cloud of vagueness and uncertainty. It is plain that to the two writers who have recorded their story, the forms of the sisters were definite, clear cut, natural, very human, and such as were to be studied in after days, and pondered, and profited by. And certainly the Lord had two very real, very greatly esteemed souls in His presence when He addressed them as He is here represented.

2. Martha was determined to provide a fine entertainment on this occasion. She was doubtless a notable housewife, and, not unnaturally, a little proud of it; and she had with her now her

dearest and most honoured Guest, and was bent on setting before Him her best, and in her best style. So there was much anxious discussion, we may suppose, about what dishes should be prepared, and not a little anxiety about their being properly cooked and served, and that the honoured Guest should have what might please Him most. It was a loving impulse on her part, and our Lord did not fail to appreciate it. All natures do not express their affection in the same way. What a blessed fact it is that our Master and Judge sees the love behind the differences, and tolerates the differences for the love's sake!

¶ The genuine kindness and mingled humour with which this old man of eighty-eight [Dr. Döllinger] looked on at youthful ways, is observable in the following letter, in which he described to me his holiday *ménage* with his nieces at Tegernsee:—

"We, uncle and nieces, are leading an idyllic life here, if an unsentimental one. I sit much in my room, and the girls go their different ways. Elise lives here much as the sparrows do, and has no cares except as regards the weather; she skips about, upstairs and down, now in the house, now in the garden, and finds room in that spacious heart of hers every day for a fresh friend. I believe she counts half the female population as her allies and patronesses. Jeanette, on the other hand, goes thoughtfully about, burdened with our household and culinary cares. She has a problem to solve which much resembles the squaring of a circle. It is her ambition to carry the art of saving to its highest point, and to eclipse, if possible, in this respect my old pensioned housekeeper. With all this, the old uncle is not to miss any of his comforts, nor is the dinner-table to be worse served than formerly, but rather better. Such opposite ends cannot of course be attained without much wear and tear of brain, especially here at Tegernsee, where living is dear, and the resources of Munich are not at hand."[1]

3. Custom in all ages has prescribed a feast as an appropriate way of honouring a guest. You give a man a mark of your confidence and respect by inviting him to your table; but you do not, after all, if you will think of it, show him the highest mark of respect by inviting him to a splendid and formal banquet, assuming that he is best entertained by the gratification of his appetite. You show him a higher token of your regard when you invite him to partake of your informal family meal; taking him into your private life, and assuming that he cares more for your society than

[1] Louise Von Kobell, *Conversations of Dr. Döllinger*, 60.

for your fare. Mary discerned this fact, with a loving woman's quick perception; and so she was less anxious than Martha about the details of the feast. She had done all that she thought necessary for comfort and decency; and she valued her Guest enough to desire to get something more out of His visit than the mere pleasure of seeing Him eat, or the gratification of having Him praise her viands. Call it a kind of selfishness, if you will—indeed, Martha had no hesitation in calling it so—it was nevertheless true, that Mary was bent on enjoying as well as entertaining her Guest. Surely we are all selfish to that extent. She knew the blessing of Jesus' presence in the house.

¶ When the allied armies entered Paris after the great battle of Waterloo, the British Ambassador prepared a banquet for the Duke of Wellington. The lady of the house observed that the Duke talked much, but ate little. So she called his attention to the fact that he was not eating. "No," said he,—"No! I don't care much about eating and drinking."

There are many aspects in which the incident of the text may be viewed. Let us take three of them, and consider:—

I. Two Temperaments.
II. Doing and Being.
III. First Things First.

I.

Two Temperaments.

1. There are some natures which are essentially passive, whose power is in their receptivity, and whose chief ministry is in their presence. Their lives pronounce benedictions, just as the activities of others confer benefactions. The bequests with which they enrich the world are not great charities and noble deeds, but sacred memories and gracious influences. They are the flower-gardens of humanity, whose value is in their beauty, not the orchards and fields, whose value is in their utility. Their charm is not in what they do, but in what they are. They are no drones in the hive of human industry, nor yet busy bees hurrying here and there in the prosecution of their useful task. They are flowers in the garden, distilling fragrance and supplying sweetness. They do not toil, neither do they spin; yet the aroma which they

exude no toil can produce, and the exquisite beauty in which they are clothed no spinning can equal. They transform the crude materials in their environment into fragrance and sweetness, but the operation is carried on within, the aroma and the nectar are in their own natures. While they thus work for themselves, they live for others. They exude their aroma with generosity, they part with their nectar with liberality.[1]

¶ While a most pleasant and delightful companion, enjoying nature and all good and innocent things in this life, Robert M'Cheyne had in a rare and singular degree his "conversation in heaven," and the influence for good he left in every place which he visited was quite extraordinary. I remember Dr. Anderson of Morpeth telling me how, when he was minister of St. Fergus, which he left at the Disruption, M'Cheyne had spent a day or two in his manse; and not only while he was there, but for a week or two after he had left, it seemed a heavenlier place than ever before. Associated with M'Cheyne's person, appearance, and conversation, on the walls of the house and everything around seemed to be inscribed, "Holiness unto the Lord."[2]

2. The contrast drawn here is not between two types of character, one of which is held to be inferior to the other. Our Lord is not commending a contemplative life, and reproving a life of action. As there are varieties of hue and form among the flowers of earth, as one star differeth from another star in glory, so there will ever be diversities of gift and nature among the members of Christ's mystical body. He would not in this sense have all His Marthas become Marys, or all His Marys Marthas; only He would that both, that all, whatever their natural disposition or acquired character, choose the good part, and supremely and constantly approve their choice.

Both sisters were sincere and warmly attached disciples of our Lord. It is expressly stated by St. John that "Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus." The whole family were alike the objects of His tender regard. He honoured them with His friendship, blessed them with His society, and was well-pleased to make His abode within their dwelling. And when He came to raise Lazarus from the grave, He distinguished the two

[1] *Conversations with Christ*, 160.
[2] *Autobiography of Thomas Guthrie*, i. 217.

sisters, and Martha even more than Mary, by the full and comforting assurances of His power and grace. We must view both the sisters, then, as His faithful and devoted followers. Both of them looked to Him in faith as the Redeemer of Israel. Both of them acknowledged His claims, received His doctrine, relied upon His promises, and, in the face of obloquy and persecution, were ready to confess His name, and willing to bear His cross.

3. The contrast is between a bustling outward spirit in Christian service, even where the service is real, and that spirit which acts or rests, works or hears, gives or receives, speaks to others or feeds itself, prepares for Jesus or sits at His feet, always with the one thing in view, Christ Himself and His glory in our salvation. This one thing determines all life and work for the Christian, as it is the only hope and portion for the seeker after salvation. When working, even, as we think, in Christ's name, takes us away from Christ Himself, working is wrong; we must then be content to be nothing, and to do nothing but sit at His feet. When this again would degenerate into selfishness or sentiment, we must bend our love to show itself in active serving. Ever the one thing—Christ last, first, everywhere. His glory in us, our love to Him. For that which is needful, after all, is not our providing for Him, or even our sitting at His feet, but that He do show Himself in us, that we have Him dwelling in our hearts by faith.

¶ The Martha and Mary type of character and disposition, if allowed to develop separately, must lead to extremes that would be pernicious to both. The one tends to materialism, and the other to asceticism and monkish laziness. But if these different modes of existence, viz., a life of activity and a life of contemplation, in germ already found in every man, were allowed to develop in a reasonable and just proportion, and brought into harmony with each other, then we should have a character well-pleasing to God and man. If the rational and sober care for the things of this world is counterbalanced by the care for the things of the spiritual world, and if the one thing needful is allowed to influence, control, and regulate our life and conduct, we should have a Christian character tending to perfection.[1]

[1] A. Fürst, *True Nobility of Character*, 22.

I cannot choose; I should have liked so much
To sit at Jesus' feet,—to feel the touch
Of His kind, gentle hand upon my head
While drinking in the gracious words He said.

And yet to serve Him!—Oh, divine employ,—
To minister and give the Master joy,
To bathe in coolest springs His weary feet,
And wait upon Him while He sat at meat!

Worship or service,—which? Ah, that is best
To which He calls us, be it toil or rest,—
To labour for Him in life's busy stir,
Or seek His feet, a silent worshipper.[1]

4. Christ gladly accepted the offering presented to Him by different types of followers. He sat at Martha's table. He proclaimed His pleasure in Mary's offering. Special qualities, even when in excess, He did not reject. Martha's extravagant activity, and Mary's extravagant generosity, did not offend Him. He looked at the motive, and, knowing that was right, He did not disdain the deed. He saw in the one a desire to honour Him in life, and in the other a desire to honour Him in death; and the desire consecrated the meal, and made of the anointing an embalming. Thus, whatever may be our native characteristics, love to Jesus will render them all acceptable to Him. And without that love, they will all be to Him an offence. Though some or all faculties and sensibilities be developed in you to the utmost possible extent, though you had all knowledge, and could remove mountains, and gave your body to be burned, without love you would be nothing.

¶ It is worth remarking how much the *poco più*—a little more—will add to a whole character. Two persons may seem to have equal elements of mental power, but there is an indescribable somewhat in the one which gives a flavour to all he has, or a certain direction to it, and which makes him more diverse, or even opposite. Mood is its passive form, purpose its active. It is like the perfume of a plant, or the amalgam in a conglomerate stone, and gives the man this individuality. By the first of these—what may be called the perfume of a character—our likings and friendships are determined; by the second—the purpose of

[1] Caroline A. Mason.

it—we guide our moral judgment. If we are to have a true friend these should go together.[1]

II.

Doing and Being.

1. Of the two sisters we have speaking likenesses. Their characters are of that pronounced type which is stamped on every act and manifested in every scene. In joy or in sorrow, at the feast or at the funeral, the individuality of each is clearly marked, the position of each is definitely fixed. Christ knows them perfectly. He has no need to ask Mary where Martha is at the time of feasting, or to ask Martha where Mary is at the time of mourning. There is the hall-mark of goodness on each of them, but we must look for it in the activity of the one and in the receptivity of the other. The goodness of Martha will be manifested in her many duties, that of Mary in her deep feeling and serious thinking. They were ideal sisters, and together took the place of the ideal wife, whom Lazarus must have despaired of finding. The one sister was the complement of the other in the home at Bethany. Martha made the home complete with every comfort; Mary filled it with peace and joy. If Martha was absent Lazarus felt uneasy, if Mary was away he was depressed. Neither sister could fill the other's place. Martha would have made a most fidgety Mary, and Mary a most unconcerned Martha. The one was a perfect head of the house, the other was the heart of the home. A division of work could never have been discussed between them, for it divided itself. Each instinctively took the part that naturally fell to her, and their united efforts made the home at Bethany an elysium of comfort and happiness.

¶ The Master does not extol sentiment at the expense of practical duty. We once knew a lady who sat for hours mooning over religious themes, and who grew quite lyrical on the subject of entire sanctification, whilst her fire-grate was choked with ashes, and her house became a veritable chaos. She mistook herself for Mary.

Our Lord delicately touches the defect of Martha in the word "cumbered," or, as it is given in the margin, "distracted." Simply,

[1] J. Ker, *Thoughts for Heart and Life*, 12.

we must not allow legitimate cares to impair our full and free fellowship with our Master. It is here that so many of us err. The sisters represent two types, in themselves equally admirable; as an old writer puts it, Martha is good before dinner, and Mary after. Happy the Christian who combines the two![1]

2. It is easier to do than to be. God has planted in us so strong an impulse towards doing that into that, almost by a necessity of our nature, our main strength ordinarily flows. He has made us restless in childhood, active and energetic in youth, that we may not sink into sloth. There is an inherent delight in one's own activity which makes all in some degree, and some, perhaps, even to excess, long to be on the move, to have a share, or, if they can, to take a lead, in all that is to be done. Every one knows that an unemployed life is not the happiest; and if no employment is a necessity of our position, we are forced to make employment, or otherwise we are wearied out with having nothing to do. And with this natural spur to activity, God has further linked some of the highest gifts that He has put within our reach. It is generally in active service that we learn the warmest love. Those to whom we give our labour almost always at last win our hearts also. Those for whom we have made sacrifices we involuntarily cherish with the truest affection. If we wish to learn to love, the way to it is generally to serve.

3. But the life of being is higher than the life of doing. Perhaps we can quite see that the heavenly mind, and the pure soul, and the inner life which is true quite through, and which, the nearer we approach it, only shines with a purer and more unearthly light, is higher, is better, is more God-like, than any service that we can render. Perhaps when we compare the two, we are able to prefer in our judgment the Christian saint to the Christian hero, the highest of those who have attained to the life of inward holiness to the highest of those whose chief excellence is in their active service. Yet in our ordinary life, in our hopes and wishes for ourselves, in our judgment of our own conduct, the lower often supplants the higher.

¶ We know full well that unless the fire of Christian self-surrender be within, all that we can see without is but hollow

[1] W. L. Watkinson, *The Gates of Dawn*, 280.

and dead, at the very best a mere part of the machinery of the world, having no more true spiritual value than the revolution of the earth on its axis. But what we are slow to know is that the inner fire, even when it has no outer service to set in motion, even when it burns alone, simply for the sake of burning, in the presence of the Lord, is still doing its appointed service, is still a power in the world of spirits, still preaches and teaches, and inspires and upholds, and is a channel of grace connecting earth and heaven, while it seems to be so still and so unemployed. Such lives are fountains of holiness, and nothing else has equal value.[1]

¶ As for matters of Huswifery, when God puts them upon you, it would bee sin either to refuse them or perform them negligently, and therefore the ignorance of them is a great shame and Danger for women that intend Marriage. But to seek these kinds of Businesses for pleasure, and to make them your delights, and to pride yourselves for your care and curiositie in them, is a great vanitie and Folly at the best, and to neglect better things and more necessarie by pretence of being imployed in these things is surely though a common Practize, yet a peice of sinfull Hypocrisie. Doe them therefore when God puts them upon you, and doe them carefully and well, and God shall reward you, however the things themselves bee but meane, accepting them at your hands as if they were greater matters, when they are done and undergone out of Obedience to His Command. But let your Delight bee onely in the better part.[2]

"O Sister! leave you thus undone
The bidding of the Lord;
Or call you this a welcome? Run
And deck with me the board."
Thus Martha spake: but spake to one
Who answered not a word:
For she kept ever singing,
"There is no joy so sweet,
As musing upon one we love
And sitting at His feet!"

"O sister! must my hands alone
His board and bath prepare?
His eyes are on you! raise your own:
He'll find a welcome there!"

[1] Archbishop Temple, *Rugby Sermons*, ii. 160.
[2] Mary Ferrar.

Thus spake again, in loftier tone,
That Hebrew woman fair.
But Mary still kept singing,
"There is no joy so sweet,
As musing upon Him we love
And resting at His feet."[1]

III.

First Things First.

1. "One thing is needful." According to some commentators, the reference is to Martha's unnecessary preparations, and the meaning is: "A single dish is sufficient." But our Lord has a deeper purpose than to give a lesson on simplicity of diet, and the phrase has passed into popular and universal use in a purely religious sense.

The saying of our Lord may be read thus: "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things; few things are needful, or one." Or, paraphrasing the words, we might take the Saviour's statement to be this: "You do wrong to be thus encumbered, divided between this care and that. I appreciate the motive, I commend the aim; yet I cannot but blame the method. You are forgetting in your ministrations to Me what others forget in their provisionings for themselves—that the real requirements of existence are few, few for the purpose of life's maintenance, and few for the purpose of life's fulness. Given certain great general elements, certain great general treasures, you have all that is really necessary; the heart that possesses them will be happy, the lot that includes them will be safe. Nay," continues the Saviour, "I will go further. Did I say man wants few things? It would be truer to say he really wants only one thing. But that is the thing that ensures all, binds all, sums all, surpasses all—namely, the knowing, the loving, and the following of Me."

(1) *One thing is needful even for worldly success.*—This saying of our Lord may be viewed with perfect truth as giving the law of success in earthly things. The way to get on in this

[1] Aubrey de Vere.

world is to feel strongly that "one thing is needful"; to have one paramount object to which all others shall be subordinated, and to which the undivided efforts of mind and body shall be devoted.

¶ Amongst an otherwise infinite variety of qualities, one is always the same, one always appears prominent, in the characters of those who have stamped their image and superscription on the history of man. They have been men devoted to one grand object; men not careful and troubled about many things, but to whom one thing, whatever that thing might be, seemed needful; men of one idea, of one pursuit, to which they made all else accessory. And this was the secret of their success. For this unity of purpose is to the mental powers what the burning glass is to the sun's rays. By concentrating them it makes them irresistible. The faculties which, if scattered, would have been weak and ineffectual, when made to converge on a single object, become a consuming fire. No opposition, unless equally concentrated and therefore equally energetic, can in the long run resist the concentrated force of all the powers of even a single average mind, steadily directed to one darling purpose.[1]

(2) *One thing is needful for spiritual attainment.*—Just as for success in this life, considered as far as possible irrespectively of the next, we have seen that it is needful to have one main object, so does the same truth apply to the next life, with this limitation only, that as success in the next life means only one thing, so it can be attained in only one way. For it is obvious that nothing can give satisfaction to the immortal spirit save the being at one with Him from whom it is derived—"the God of the spirits of all flesh." Union with God is therefore the "one thing needful" for eternal happiness; and unless that union be attained already here, we have no sure ground for hope that it may be attained hereafter. For death, which is simply the transition from this world to the next, cannot at once, as by magic, change the character. He that is filthy here will after death be filthy still; death cannot make him holy; death cannot give the one thing needful. It must be sought and gained now, if it is to be possessed then. The one thing needful for eternity must therefore be the one thing needful for time. Here then we have an object set before us, in comparison with which all

[1] C. P. Reichel.

other objects are insignificant; an object, to succeed in which is a greater triumph than to gain the empire of the whole world.

¶ Many things we may have, but one thing we must have, if life is to be life. Many things are useful, many are important; but one is necessary, absolutely necessary. Mary had chosen it; and we are almost given to understand—though Jesus gently refrains from saying so—that Martha had not. While Martha was preparing one meal, Mary was enjoying another; for the "portion" of which Jesus speaks is the word used elsewhere for the share of a meal. Two banquets were preparing in that house; and Mary was already sitting at the table of her Lord in the heavenly world, partaking, at His gracious hand, of that bread of which he who takes shall never hunger again. This portion could never be taken away from her.[1]

As 'mid the thickness of some leafy wood
The sun-beams find a passage here and there,
And light some spot which erst in shadow stood,
Making each leaflet look more bright and fair,
While other patches, that lie round it, miss
The ray of radiant Light that fills itself with bliss,—

So is it in the tangled wood of life:
Some souls there are that keep the open way,
Free from the boughs of earthly hindrance, rife
For every advent of the Heavenly ray;—
Ready to catch it as in love it comes
To seek the loving souls that are its willing homes.[2]

(3) *One thing is needful for Christian service.*—We all know the difference between the gift that is the expression of a grateful heart and the gift the value of which lies in its costliness. The worth of the one is exactly measured by its price in the market, by the immediate use to which it can be put, or in the exchange which it will secure. The other may have no market value. It is but a withered flower, a bit of ribbon, a leaf sent in a letter, some fragment of handiwork; but it is the expression of a love that is embodied in the gift, a love that tries to find utterance, that does not wait to obtain a gift of value, but that knows its

[1] J. E. McFadyen, *The City with Foundations*, 16.
[2] John Sharp, *Poems and Hymns*.

own worth, and rejoices in the opportunity to pour itself out upon the one who has called it forth.

¶ One of the family was a little lad who was weak-minded, and him the father and mother specially loved. Yet there was little response to their affection. But one day, when the other children were gathering flowers and bringing them to their parents, the poor little lad gathered a bundle of dry sticks and brought them to his father. "I valued those sticks," said the father afterwards, "far more than the fairest flowers." We are not all equally gifted—some can bring lovely flowers to God's service and honour; others can only gather dry sticks. But even the "cup of cold water" is accepted by Him.

2. The one thing needful does not supersede all other things. It does not rob us of all other interests. In accepting and following Christ, we are not as a rule called to withdraw from any of those great primal influences that replenish and illuminate life, and make natural living bright and full and glad; we receive them afresh from the hand of the Saviour we have accepted, to be ours with a new safety, ours by a new right. Society may remain to us; but social intercourse will be purified. Beauty may remain to us; but our sense of the beautiful will be regulated, our standard of the beautiful will be raised. Culture may remain to us; but it will be culture through the purest sources, culture for the highest ends. Relaxation may remain to us; but it will be relaxation guarded by Christian principles, and made subservient to Christian aims. In the choosing and pursuing of the one thing, we have the assurance that the lower things will be sanctified, so long as these lower things abide. And if they abide not, but pass, then the gospel will make up for their absence by more than compensating elements in itself: for society, the fellowship of the faithful; for beauty, the beauty of holiness; for culture, the enlightening, the expanding, and the refining influences of the Word of God; for relaxation, the quiet of Christian meditation, or the timely relief of changes in Christian work.

¶ To all highly sensitive natures which shrink from action and effort, which are revolted by the coarseness, the stupidity, the brutality of the world, it is a great temptation to get away from it all, and to live life more congenially in the contemplation of perfection. The contemplative man finds the vision of moral

purity and holiness so ineffably beautiful and sacred that he is sorely tempted to conceal it, to enjoy it, to lose himself in it. If he speaks of it, the rough comments and the dull derision of the world are so wounding, so cruel, that he does not venture to profane it. Here he diverges from the method of Christ, whose whole teaching was devoted to setting out in the simplest terms the beauty of holiness; and the amazing secret growth of Christianity, which ran like an electric pulse over the world, testifies to the fact that thousands of hearts had the same dim vision, and only needed that it should be defined.[1]

3. The one supreme thing keeps other things in their proper place and colours the whole of life. The nearness of the Divine, as it diffuses itself over the soul's horizon, permeating the inner and outer courts thereof, will give colour and character to all the things of the life that now is. Earth will be purified by being taken up into the embrace of the spiritual. All will be informed with a "light that never was on sea or land." As heaven bows down, overshadowing and permeating our spirits, earth, standing in the presence thereof, will be compelled to put off its shoes and be made in its expression to harmonize with it. It will then become a help instead of a hindrance to the upward longings, affections and movements of the soul. There has been no natural antagonism placed between them on the part of their Maker. They are full of mutual analogies, the one being but the vestibule of the other, or the lower part of a ladder by which the soul is, or should be, helped upward to the vision and joy of Divine things.

> What if earth be but the shadow of heaven,
> And each to other like more than on earth is thought?

¶ Astronomers were long puzzled by certain minute bodies that revolve in the highway of the planets, too small and too numerous to be accounted separate satellites, revolving round the sun in mixed and interlacing orbits. At length the thought was hit upon that these were the fragments of a larger planet shattered out of its original unity, yet retaining the direction of its original impulse and continuing to revolve as disjointed members of that which was a planet no more. The finger of their great Former had implanted in them a law under which they still moved even in ruins. So it is with our human heart; the

[1] A. C. Benson, *Thy Rod and Thy Staff*, 141.

restless search, the constant care and cumber, the unslaked thirst for happiness, the saying "Who will shew us any good?"—these are the traces of a divinely implanted law. The soul is dislocated and out of joint, and hence the law breeds nothing but confusion and distraction. Only get the central gravitating power restored, only let all desires and strivings find their satisfaction in the one thing needful, and the same law is the harmony of the soul—the equilibrium of the heart.[1]

4. The "one thing" is a lasting possession. In all the years to come, Mary was to carry as a treasure in her soul the memory of that hour. She had sat at Jesus' feet, she had looked into His loving face, she had seen in the depths of His eyes the preparation for the giving of Himself for her and for the sins of the world. The memory of that hour was to remain so vivid, so satisfying, so compelling, in all her later life, that she entered at once into the knowledge of that new intimacy with the Risen Lord which was expressed in His promise: "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

¶ Mary was quick to perceive that there are times and seasons in our relations to God. The Lord's ministry was rapidly passing away. The opportunity for the privileges of loving expression and for personal service would be few. Mary seizes this one as it passes; and the wisdom of her act, not to say its supreme importance, is what the Lord recognizes and approves. There are times when the Lord means to give us surcease of care, and to lift our spirits into the light of His countenance, and to create in us the radiant joy of a Divine companionship,—times when our spirit responds to the Spirit of God, and when we are permitted to hear the voice of God calling to us as the still small voice spoke to the prophet after the whirlwind and the fire. Then is the golden opportunity for the man who would know God. In such hours the Master calls us to new duties, or opens to us new doors of opportunity, or seeks to bestow upon us new joys in new revelations of Himself. Well for us if, with Mary, we recognize the hour and the privilege.[2]

She sitteth at the Master's feet
In motionless employ;
Her ears, her heart, her soul complete
Drinks in the tide of joy.

[1] J. Laidlaw, *Studies in the Parables*, 232.
[2] H. A. Stimson, *The New Things of God*, 151.

Ah! who but she the glory knows
Of life, pure, high, intense,
In whose eternal silence blows
The wind beyond the sense!

In her still ear, God's perfect grace
Incarnate is in voice;
Her thoughts, the people of the place,
Receive it, and rejoice.

Her eyes, with heavenly reason bright,
Are on the ground cast low;
His words of spirit, life, and light—
They set them shining so.

Sure, joy awoke in her dear heart
Doing the thing it would,
When He, the holy, took her part,
And called her choice the good!

Oh needful thing, Oh Mary's choice,
Go not from us away!
Oh Jesus, with the living voice,
Talk to us every day![1]

[1] G. MacDonald, "The Gospel Women" (*Poetical Works*, i. 243).

The Gift of the Holy Spirit.

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The Gift of the Holy Spirit.

If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?—Luke xi. 13.

1. The text is an inference rather than a demonstration. This was quite a favourite method with Christ—to take a generally admitted premise and shut His hearers up to a necessary conclusion resulting from it. Analyze the present statement and it comes to this: Human nature is confessedly selfish, yet men are not so exclusively devoted to themselves and to their own interests as not to provide for their offspring. Now, if they, being self-centred and self-regarding, do this, shall a supremely benevolent Being fall short, and fail to supply the deepest needs of those who seek His interference on their behalf?

2. Notice, again, that here, as always, Jesus draws His parable from the simplest habits of man. Giving to those we love is a necessary part of our happiness, one might almost say of our humanity. Imagine if you can a family in which there is no delightful giving from parent to child, child to parent, brother to sister; it is simply inconceivable. All family life is a daily acting out of the great saying, It is more blessed to give than to receive. Let any one think of a birthday in a household, of the gifts that pour in as symbols of the love that is felt. It needs no great virtue in a parent to rejoice in the pleasure of a child when it receives a gift; it may well be one of the few unworldly moments of a generally worldly life taken up and saturated with the poor desire of gain. But this poor desire slips aside for a time as he sees his child smiling and rejoicing over some small birthday gift.

Now this is the habit, the instinct, on which Jesus Christ fixes His eye. He detects in it a proof of prayer. He sees in it something of the majesty of God. No infirmity, no degradation even

on the part of the parent can prevent him from so far being a witness, indeed an interpreter and representative of his all-perfect, all-bounteous Creator. "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"

Let us consider—

I. The Giver.
II. The Gift.
III. The Recipients.

I.

The Giver.

1. The Giver is God, and we must begin by regarding Him as a personal Being. This may not seem so easy in these modern days as it was in the childhood of the race. Old Testament saints found no difficulty in clinging to God as to a friend; God was very personal to them. Every common bush was afire with Him. They spoke and acted as if they saw Him. Elect souls who had trained themselves to believe in the moral attributes of God came to trust the personal God Himself. God's righteousness, mercy, loving-kindness, truth, are not so much abstract attributes of His essential nature as the forms through which He brings Himself near to man's life. By the manifestation of these in history and in the career of individuals, He reveals Himself. He cannot be separated from these attributes. They have no reality apart from Him; and this was the lesson which the prophets more particularly and the teachers of ancient Israel were continually insisting should be learned by their countrymen. A few of them learned it. They could not think of goodness and righteousness except as associated with one God, whose law, as it sought to rule men's lives, was the expression of His mind.

We marvel at times at the spacious prayers contained in some of the Psalms, and in some of the prophecies of the Old Testament. How easily, yet how grandly, these men of long ago moved among great thoughts of the Creator. The very names they gave Him—"Almighty," "Everlasting," "King," "Lord of Hosts"—reveal the magnitude of the ideas which dominated their minds. These

names indicated something real and vast. They represented the supremacy of the Divine control, its absoluteness in great things as in small. A man who uttered such prayers never felt himself lost in the unlimited largeness of the universe, but was sure that He who knew all and was everywhere could never forget the least of His creatures, or be uninterested in him. "O Lord, thou hast searched me and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thoughts afar off. . . . There is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. . . . Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? . . . Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." The majesty of God and the faith of man are brought together in thoughts and words that are made possible only to him who in endeavouring to understand himself strives to come near in reverent belief to his Creator.

¶ Personality, like prayer, is a force of which we have daily experience in ordinary life. The south-eastern district of Lancashire became, as is well known, the seat of the great cotton industry because it was one of the few parts of England in which the atmospheric conditions made it possible to work up this natural product into the familiar fabrics of commerce. The rainfall of that region, which is a source of continual complaint to those who live in it, has been the cause of its wealth, for cotton will break in the working if the air is not damp. But to-day, so far have we advanced in knowledge and invention that the manufacturer can make himself independent of the variations of climate by raising the atmosphere of his mill to the point of humidity required for weaving. It is in this way that human personality is on every hand adapting, modifying, selecting the conditions under which it acts, and Nature is conquered by obeying it. So is it, I conceive, that those spiritual beings, whether good or evil, which rise above the race of men in the hierarchy of personal life, live and move and operate. And the great Father, whose robe Nature is, is surely no irresponsible Sultan but Himself as one under authority when He makes the winds His messengers, His ministers the flames of fire.[1]

2. Christ taught us to call God "Father." The name which Christ gives to God elevates the whole idea of prayer, and places

[1] J. G. Simpson, *The Spirit and the Bride*, 169.

within the reach of us all a truth about the Creator which only a few of the most serious minds before had reached. Christ's teaching that God is our Father supplies us with the belief about God that quickens and purifies all our entreaties and resolutions. We begin then to understand that prayer is one of our privileges as His children, and we regard it less as a means of obtaining the gratification of our personal wishes than as an occasion of confidential inter-communion by which all our cares and griefs pass from us into the Divine heart, and we are made of one will with the Father.

¶ Tennyson thus describes the love of a true father for his offspring:

> Beat upon mine, little heart! beat, beat!
> Beat upon mine! you are mine, my sweet!
> All mine from your pretty blue eyes to your feet,
> My sweet.
>
> Sleep, little blossom, my honey, my bliss!
> For I give you this, and I give you this!
> And I blind your pretty blue eyes with a kiss!
> Sleep!
>
> Father and Mother will watch you grow,
> And gather the roses whenever they blow,
> And find the white heather wherever you go,
> My sweet.

3. The Heavenly Father transcends all earthly parents in His willingness to bless His children. Christ singles out an intensely human characteristic and makes it the hint of a corresponding attribute in God. He takes it for granted, as a familiar fact, that parents are disposed to grant the reasonable requests of their children for good things, and, building upon this basis, He proceeds to bring God within the range of our apprehension by the affirmation that He is equally willing to bestow upon mankind what He considers to be the best thing He has to give. It is clear that, according to Christ's representation, God, their Maker, is generously disposed towards the children of men. He wishes to help them, in the highest sense; He would enlighten, enlarge, elevate, enrich them. This statement is of itself equivalent to a revelation. It announces this splendid truth, that

benevolence, generosity, helpfulness, are basal and underlying attributes of God. It is His nature to communicate of His life, of His fulness and exuberant richness, to the moral creatures He has made. He wishes to impart to them, so far as they are able to receive it, His own point of view, His own contentment and repose, His own moral perfections.

¶ It is told of Thomas Chalmers, that he was seen on the last morning of his life wandering among the flowers in his garden, as he murmured the words, "O, heavenly Father, my heavenly Father." What nobler attitude towards the universe could you desire than that? I ask for no God who would deflect from its orbit a single star, or violate the laws which govern the growth of the meanest flower. I ask for no God who has no reverence for the way of the wind, or for those hidden processes whereby the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child. But in the evening and morning and at noonday will I pray out of the deep of my own personality to Him who maketh the seven stars and Orion, and who is the God of my life, knowing that He will cause all things to work together for good to them that love Him, and that He will hear my voice.[1]

4. The Heavenly Father has knowledge which earthly fathers have not. If even an evil parent has natural affection enough to lead him to supply this simple want, so the most ignorant have knowledge enough, not always to do it in the best way, but at least to give what is absolutely necessary, and what is asked for. But we have deeper wants than the want of bread, and wants that require a far deeper knowledge to supply them; yet the infinite knowledge and wisdom of God are sufficient for them all.

Sometimes, for instance, we are placed in difficult circumstances, and know not how to act. In such a case man's knowledge, both our own and that of our fellow-creatures, fails. Man cannot help us then; but we seek guidance of God, and find that He knows how to give us just what we want. Our prayer is heard, help and guidance are given, and we are brought through our difficulties. Not perhaps immediately, and not by any strange means; yet in the end we are brought safely through. Our Heavenly Father knows how to give us just what we want.

¶ Our little children in their ignorance make many a foolish request, but we do not insist they shall ask for nothing again.

[1] J. G. Simpson, *The Spirit and the Bride*, 170.

We simply by our refusal train them to ask better, and to confied in a larger wisdom than their own. We sometimes ask God to deliver us from things that do not necessarily injure the soul, however unpleasant and dangerous they look, such as illness, poverty, bad business, loss, and death. And God does not hear our prayer. It takes us long to see that our prayer is best answered, not by what it does for us externally, but by what it effects in our mind and heart, in the way we look at life, and the way we trust God. We can never fail, however, to have the answer to our prayer when we ask to be delivered from sin, and callousness of spirit, and pride, and unbelief, for these touch us in our divinest part and imperil the soul's beauty and security. God loves our good more than our happiness, and works more for the sake of securing in us a childlike disposition than comfortable circumstances. Some of us may have said with Jean Ingelow: "I have lived to thank God that all my prayers have not been answered."[1]

II.

The Gift.

1. The gift here promised is the Holy Spirit, and this gift includes every blessing. It is the essence of all good things, the highest good.

The worth of this gift is immeasurable. Jesus spoke of the Spirit as "the promise of the Father"; the one promise in which God's Fatherhood revealed itself. The best gift a good and wise father can bestow on a child on earth is his own spirit. This is the great object of a father in education—to reproduce in his child his own disposition and character. If the child is to know and understand his father; if, as he grows up, he is to enter into all his will and plans; if he is to have his highest joy in the father, and the father in him, he must be of one mind and spirit with him. And so it is impossible to conceive of God bestowing any higher gift on His child than this, His own Spirit. God is what He is through His Spirit; the Spirit is the very life of God.

¶ Every seventh day, if not oftener, the greater number of well-meaning persons in England thankfully receive from their teachers a benediction, couched in those terms:—"The grace of

[1] W. Watson, *Prayer*, 102.

our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with you." Now I do not know precisely what sense is attached in the English public mind to those expressions. But what I have to tell you positively is that the three things do actually exist, and can be known if you care to know them, and possessed if you care to possess them; and that another thing exists, besides these, of which we already know too much.

First, by simply obeying the orders of the Founder of your religion, all grace, graciousness, or beauty and favour of gentle life, will be given to you in mind and body, in work and in rest. The grace of Christ exists, and can be had if you will.

Secondly, as you know more and more of the created world, you will find that the true will of its Maker is that its creatures should be happy; that He has made everything beautiful in its time and its place, and that it is chiefly by the fault of men, when they are allowed the liberty of thwarting His laws, that Creation groans or travails in pain. The love of God exists, and you may see it, and live in it if you will.

Lastly, a Spirit does actually exist which teaches the ant her path, the bird her building, and men, in an instinctive and marvellous way, whatever lovely arts and noble deeds are possible to them. Without it you can do no good thing. To the grief of it you can do many bad ones. In the possession of it is your peace and your power.[1]

¶ Christ came to bring man's spirit into immediate contact with God's Spirit; to sweep away everything intermediate. In lonely union, face to face, man's spirit and God's Spirit must come together. It is a grand thought! Aspire to this! Aspire to greatness, goodness! So let your spirit mingle with the Spirit of the Everlasting.[2]

We know that men, corrupt and vain,
 Will grant their children's prayer,
And can we think Thou wilt not deign
 To make our wants Thy care?

For Thou, O God, our Father art,
 And Thou art wholly good,
And every need of every heart
 By Thee is understood.

[1] Ruskin, *Lectures on Art*, § 125 (*Works*, xx. 115).
[2] F. W. Robertson.

Not wealth, nor length of days our quest,
 Not years untouched by pain;
A purer gift, of gifts the best,
 Thy children seek to gain.

More of Thy Spirit is our want;
 That Spirit now instil;
We know Thou wilt; for this to grant
 Must be our Father's will.[1]

2. The Holy Spirit is indispensable. There is a sublime and unspeakable side to religion; its superlative attainments are not the outcome of our native powers, but require an impulse, an initiative, originating in another sphere. Of course, knowledge, intellectual apprehension of its doctrines, duties and expectations, is a material element in it, but it does not exhaust the subject. There enter into it certain frames of feeling, a certain attitude of the will. It embodies the emotional and voluntary nature. There is considerable religious knowledge; the creeds of Christendom are well known, multitudes apprehend intellectually all that is important for them to know at present; but does this do much perceptible good? Do our pious, orthodox, abstract convictions give spring, courage, enthusiasm? What is wanted to make them vivid, dynamic, controlling, compelling? The truth, in this obscure matter, seems to be that the soul of man needs to be moved upon, illuminated, energized from above. In order to come into close and fruitful relation with religious truths and ideals, these should be made to pass before the imagination with such port and majesty, to commend themselves to the conscience with such convincing demonstration, to appeal to the affections as so intrinsically lovely, that the soul shall spontaneously espouse them. But our nature cannot develop such enthusiasm. We are swayed by other desires and ambitions. To get a sense of God as a perpetual presence, as a mighty inspiration, as an abounding joy—for such high achievement the natural man is not equal. The great mystics, the great religious natures in every age, have felt this to be true. They have agreed with St. Paul that they were "wretched men," and did not find it in themselves to be much better; could not overtake, or come abreast with, their

[1] S. C. Lowry, *Hymns and Spiritual Songs*, 26.

noblest aspirations. The potent, ineffable influence, the Holy Spirit, appears to be indispensable in order that man may realize his highest possibilities and come to the crown of his being.

¶ Those of you who still go to chapel say every day your creed; and, I suppose, too often, less and less every day believing it. Now, you may cease to believe two articles of it, and,—admitting Christianity to be true,—still be forgiven. But I can tell you—you must not cease to believe the third! You begin by saying that you believe in an Almighty Father. Well, you may entirely lose the sense of that Fatherhood, and yet be forgiven. You go on to say that you believe in a Saviour Son. You may entirely lose the sense of that Sonship, and yet be forgiven. But the third article—disbelieve if you dare! "I believe in the Holy Ghost, *the Lord and Giver of life*."—Disbelieve that; and your own being is degraded into the state of dust driven by the wind; and the elements of dissolution have entered your very heart and soul.[1]

3. Christ could commend the Holy Spirit to His disciples, because He knew from experience what this gift would mean. See how the Saviour Himself from the moment of His baptism saw His life of service, His victory through death, unfolded before Him in the power of the anointing, the consecrating Spirit; how in the Spirit He was driven into the wilderness to meet the ordeal of fire by which He was annealed for His redemptive cross. See how one New Testament writer after another with sympathetic insight represents the Son of Man as through the eternal Spirit offering Himself without spot to God, and through the same indwelling presence raised from the dead by the glory of the Father! It is the Spirit who alone can show us the shining vesture of Him who has the keys of Death and of Hades in the coarse garments of the Syrian peasant arraigned before Annas and condemned by Pilate, for no man can say that Jesus is Lord but by the Holy Ghost. It is the Spirit who alone can show us in that figure stumbling along the way of sorrows none other than Jehovah Himself, travelling in the greatness of His strength mighty to save. None but the Spirit can put a new song in our mouths as we uplift our eyes to the deserted cross, bidding us cry with the innumerable company of celestial choirs, and with the spirits of the just, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain." "He

[1] Ruskin, *The Eagle's Nest*, § 169 (*Works*, xxii. 236).

that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the Churches."

¶ If I have to speak more than once at a Convention, I invariably give at least one address to the subject of the Holy Spirit. But I am more and more deeply impressed with the fact that Jesus Christ is the great centre of Christianity, and that the Spirit's work is to reveal Him. If we speak so as to fill people with a vague desire and expectancy to receive something into their hearts—they don't quite know what—we may lead them away from the truth. This prevents my saying all that I hear some men say, but I quite agree with you that the Spirit has not been sufficiently honoured in the churches, and that we have not cultivated as we ought a sense of dependence on Him. In this way He has been dishonoured and grieved, and His work restrained. All this modern sensationalism is a sad token of our loss of faith in Him. Amid all these varying theories and conflicting views there is great comfort for a man like me in the remembrance that the Holy Spirit is the gift of God, and that He will certainly fill with His Spirit a surrendered, open, believing heart. There are times when I am quite sure that I speak in the power of the Spirit, though I should hesitate to say precisely what was my relation to the Spirit. I mean that I could not state it in any doctrinal form.[1]

(1) At Christ's Baptism, the Spirit descended like a dove, and filled His soul with *peace*. And this peace He wished to share with His disciples. It is the peace that comes after victory. For forty days Jesus was tempted of the devil, but not overcome. The Spirit brought Him into the wilderness, and now when the conflict is over what takes place? We are told that angels came and ministered unto Him, but we are also told of the Spirit ministering unto Him, for it is said that He "returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee." Yet it is not said that He, like the angels, came unto Him. No, He did not come, for since His descent upon Him, He had remained with Him. It is characteristic of the Spirit to abide. "And he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth."

Well might the Saviour recommend this Spirit. He had been with Him all through His temptation, and He is with every one who receives Him, from first to last—never leaving or forsaking him. Surely He is the good gift of God!

[1] *John Brash: Memorials and Correspondence*, 137.

Oft in a dark and lonely place
I hush my hastened breath,
To hear the comfortable words
Thy loving Spirit saith;
And feel my safety in Thy hand
From every kind of death.

Then in the secret of my soul,
Though hosts my peace invade,
Though through a waste and weary land
My lonely way be made,
Thou, even Thou, wilt comfort me—
I need not be afraid.

Still in the solitary place
I would awhile abide,
Till with the solace of Thy love
My heart is satisfied;
And all my hopes of happiness
Stay calmly at Thy side.[1]

(2) Again, the Spirit meant *power*. The prophet had represented the servant of Jehovah as having the Spirit upon Him, and there was He, conscious that the prophecy was an accomplished fact in His own experience. He is anointed for His ministry of blessing among the poor, the wounded, the bound, the blind, and the oppressed, and the Spirit of the Lord is upon Him. And so it was all through His lifetime of labour. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me." Never at any moment was Christ bereft of that comfort; and what a comfort it must have been to Him! Men did not understand Him, but the Spirit did. Men did not love Him, but the Spirit did. Many who had followed Him turned away from Him, but the Spirit never did.

Well might He then speak of Him as the sum of all good gifts and so recommend Him to His disciples. The work which He was doing they were to continue, and to do it effectively they needed the same Spirit.

¶ "How many do you count me for?" asked the Macedonian general, as his soldiers expressed their fear of going into battle against great odds. "How many do you count me for?" asks the Holy Ghost, who still abides in the church with His undivided

[1] A. L. Waring.

presence and His undiminished power. Christ, in the person of the Holy Spirit, dwells in every church in the fulness of His presence. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them," is the Magna Charta of the local church. Christ is not divided; He has not distributed Himself among His churches, giving a part of Himself to each, so that only by a union of all the churches can we secure the presence of the whole Christ. Herein is the immense difference between spiritual force and physical force.[1]

4. The Holy Spirit means the redemption of our common life. The deepening of the spiritual life which we lack can come to us only through the solicited energy of the Holy Spirit. Just as in the sphere of music men invoke the spirit of music that they may become great musicians, and in the sphere of art invoke the spirit of art that they may become great artists, so we must invoke the Spirit of Holiness—no mere idealized conception in this instance, but the Living Spirit of the Living God—that we may become holy men and holy women, that we may become great and good in the spheres of character and conduct, that we may live that deeper and diviner life of which we are capable.

¶ The Whitsuntide Fair with its crowds and its noise, its vulgarity and its coarseness, its low buffoonery, reminded one of what goes on behind the scenes in men's lives, and of how much there still is of the brute and the savage in many of us. Man's world outside corresponds to his world inside, and I say that the only thing which can bring to us sweetness and order, and good government, and effectual and holy living, is that power which is obtained by prayer, and which comes to us through the inspirations of the Holy Spirit.[2]

III.

The Recipients.

1. The recipients of the Holy Spirit are those who ask the Father for Him. Jesus reminds us that the man who prays is only applying to the sphere of his fellowship with God the principles which obtain in the ordinary intercourse of daily life.

[1] *A. J. Gordon: A Biography*, 242.
[2] T. Sanderson, *The Illimitable Domain*, 91.

The dictates of common sense suggest that he should ask if he wishes to receive. The bell at our front door, the forms of application issued by the thousand from every office which has favours to distribute, the advertising columns of the daily press witness to the important place which asking holds in the development of human lives and in the conduct of human affairs. How foolish would be the person who should plead a rigid theory of determinism as an excuse for waiting until something should turn up! How many doors remain closed because those who are free to enter are too shy to knock! How many opportunities are lost because those for whom they are waiting are too lazy to seek! How many boons are never granted because those for whom they are intended have not courage to ask! Bread will not fall into our mouths. Work will not drop from the skies. It may be true enough that the labour exchange is not the final remedy for want of employment. But our method of dealing with the man who will not put down his name should be short and sharp. It is the ordinary experience of life to which our Lord appeals when He says, "Ask, and it shall be given you." "Every one that asketh receiveth" is a universal proposition.

It is this principle that the man of faith carries with him into his spiritual life. What others have tried and tested in the daily play of human intercourse he has found good also in that larger world in which the soul holds communion with the Eternal. Too often has he proved its prevailing efficacy to mistake the silence of God for a rebuke to his persistent petitions, or for an evidence of an ear that hears not, of an arm that cannot save. It is not presumption, it is trust that prays.

¶ Is it said that only the prayer of faith is heard? True; but every real prayer is a prayer of faith.[1]

¶ It is a great law that God's blessings must be sought. If we want them, we must ask Him for them. It is no hard condition. The instinct of prayer has been firmly planted within us. We have but to exercise it. There are times when we could not repress it if we tried. It is true that when we argue about it we can find difficulties, and perhaps make them. We can, of course, imagine that God might have made His giving to be independent of our desiring. We can see also that, by permitting us to ask,

[1] Thomas Erskine, *Unconditional Freeness of the Gospel.*

He has allowed us an intimacy of intercourse with Himself which could not otherwise have been ours.

The condition is part of the law of labour under which we live. Nothing can be done without effort—somebody's effort. Nothing can be done for us permanently without our own effort. Prayer is the noblest kind of effort. Truly, to pray needs the fullest exercise of all our highest powers.

The condition is part, too, of the law of liberty under which we are placed. The best things are not forced upon us. In one of His lessons on the subject of prayer, our Lord points to a difference between the action of the forces of good and of evil. The evil spirit is rude and inconsiderate. It intrudes unbidden. When it has been expelled, it insists upon returning with violence the moment it sees a chance. The Heavenly Father cannot act thus. He is most willing to "give the Holy Spirit," but it must be "to them that ask him."[1]

¶ Above the beautiful waters of Rydalmere there is one of the most enchanting spots in the English Lakes. An old grey wall fences in a road which runs beside the slopes below, shaded by varied trees and rich with wild flowers. In an opening in the wall stands an aged and venerable gate, much inscribed by names and initials of many generations. It is the Wishing Gate; and there for centuries, young and old, happy lovers and saddened mourners, men and women in every phase of life, have leant, and looked with admiration at the exquisite landscape, and formed a wish which is not to be whispered to a friend or companion. Beyond the outline of the hills opposite, shines the glory of the southern sky, suggesting thoughts of the infinite and the eternal. That is an emblem of what our Lord wants to see in the daily life and thoughts of each one of us. We are not to walk through life in solitary pride and scornful self-sufficiency; for each of us, in the secret of our souls, there is to be a Wishing Gate; we are to call for everything that we need upon the illimitable love of our Divine Father.[2]

2. The Father is free to answer the prayers of His children. He is not a prisoner held fast by the forces He has made. The world is not, as some suppose, a vast machine, which its Maker cannot control. Science cannot explain what force is, or how its changes of form are brought about; and is there any reason against our supposing that God may employ the forces of Nature

[1] A. W. Robinson, *The Voice of Joy and Health*, 79.
[2] W. M. Sinclair, *Difficulties of our Day*, 143.

to meet the changing requirements of His moral government? May the Divine Mind not have other purposes to fulfil than those that are expressed in the works we see? May there not be laws higher than the laws which we have discovered, and may not the will of God, which is before and beyond all things, make these, by processes we cannot imagine, serve the great ends of His providence? He is a living God, and Nature is ever evolving, and we may surely believe that His relation to the thing He has made is close and operative and constant. For aught that we know to the contrary, God may employ the forces of Nature to carry forward and complete the purposes He has in view in His moral government of His children. We know so little of them that we dare not say He does not so use them, and we are so sure of His goodness and power that we shall hesitate to disbelieve that He can do all things.

¶ At sixty years of age Dr. Pierson was not too old to learn, and, with humility and an eager thirst after knowledge, he listened as Mr. George Müller of Bristol gave detailed testimony to show God as a hearer and answerer of prayer. In one of these interviews he asked Mr. Müller if he had ever petitioned God for anything that had not been granted.

"Sixty-two years, three months, five days and two hours have passed," replied Mr. Müller with his characteristic exactness, "since I began to pray that two men might be converted. I have prayed daily for them ever since and as yet neither of them shows any signs of turning to God."

"Do you expect God to convert them?"

"Certainly," was the confident reply. "Do you think God would lay on His child such a burden for sixty-two years if He had no purpose for their conversion?"

Not long after Mr. Müller's death, Dr. Pierson was again in Bristol, preaching in Bethesda Chapel—the meeting-place of the Brethren. In the course of his sermon, he told of this conversation, and as he was going out at the close of the service a lady stopped him and said: "One of those two men, to whom Mr. Müller referred, was my uncle. He was converted and died a few weeks ago. The other man was brought to Christ in Dublin."[1]

3. Prayer becomes potent, when it represents the attitude of the soul. It is only as prayer becomes a habit, a kind of second nature with us, that it is really effectual. The giving of the

[1] *Life of A. T. Pierson*, 277.

Spirit is not like the opening and the shutting of a door. It is not like a parcel flung into our hand, of the reality of which we have ocular and tangible proof. There are some people who shoot up their prayers like a rocket, and they expect the answer to come to them like the falling of the stick after the powder has exploded. But all this is grossly to misconceive the character of prayer. The Heavenly Father gives the inspiration of the Spirit as He gives the summer—not in one sudden burst of magnificence, and in an instantaneous ripening, but by a gradual growth, and by slow processes, and by many subtle and silent operations, extending over a period of several weeks: "first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." So God gives His Spirit in answer to prayer, gradually, persistently, silently, and for the most part without realization of the fact by the recipient, yet effectually energizing the powers of the mind and heart. Individual acts of prayer may or may not avail to ensure what we pray for, but the habit of prayer never fails.

¶ Prayer, in so far as it implies that the mind has been uplifted towards an ideal of all goodness, a going out into the infinite, is invaluable to man, and marks the great distinction between him and the lower animals. It is answered so far as it is high and holy aspiration, being an exercise of mind which thereby creates the condition it prays for. After all, we do not know that mind-power has not a material existence somewhere, just as much as electricity has. If will-power could be brought together as a concentrated force, it might have very astonishing results. At present it is too broken up.[1]

4. The Father's answer to our prayer will be evident in our life and bearing. The gift of the Holy Spirit will mean a holy and resplendent life. With every true prayer God has more to do than the person who prays, and therefore every true prayer carries part of its own answer. "God," as the old mystics loved to say, "is an unutterable sigh in the innermost depth of the soul." What God prompts within us He knows how to meet. We learn slowly to put away childish things from our mind when we pray, and our main desire is that He will, in ways that He Himself deems best, give us that which will more deeply and visibly impress on our character the strength and calm of Christ,

[1] George Frederic Watts, in *Life*, ii. 223.

and arm us for the battle and make us more than conquerors in it.

¶ Where the Spirit of the Incarnate is indwelling, He is present neither as a distinct or extraneous gift, nor as an overruling force in which the self is merged and lost, but at the consummation of the self. . . . He is not a mere presence *in* me, overruling, controlling, displacing. What He in me does, I do. What He in me wills, I will. What He in me loves, I love. Nay, never is my will so really free; never is my power so worthy of being called power; never is my rational wisdom so rational or so wise; never is my love so really love; never moreover is any one of these things so royally my own; never am I, as I, so capable, so personal, so real; never am I, in a word, as really what the real "I" always tried to mean; as when by the true indwelling of the Spirit of God, I enter into the realization of myself; as when I at last correspond to, and fulfil, and expand in fulfilling, all the unexplored possibilities of my personal being, by a perfect mirroring of the Spirit of Christ; as when in Him and by Him I am, at last, a true, willing, personal response to the very Being of God.[1]

¶ Nobody can tell us what makes a carbon a diamond. The same substance is in both, but the one will shine in the dark and the other will not. We cannot see what makes the difference, except that the diamond, which is carbon after all, has managed to feed upon the light somehow, and store it, and shine by its lustre. Holiness is character, the shining light that never was on sea or land; holiness is character with a fragrance; holiness is an influence of itself, and it is begotten of communion with the Unseen, and without that you never have it, and no man has ever had it. When you speak about the men you know in business life who are living well and nobly without any particular faith in God, with nothing more than a faith in right, you know, as well as I know, and as well as they know too, that if you place a Spurgeon and a Catherine Booth alongside them, the difference is that of the diamond and of the carbon, and the difference is made by prayer. The one is mighty in the communion with the Unseen, and the other is not. The witness of holiness to the efficacy of prayer is this, that no saint ever prayed and doubted about his answer; if it came not in one way, it came in another. Unvarying, unaltering is the witness of holiness to the fact that God does hear prayer, however it is done.[2]

[1] R. C. Moberly, *Atonement and Personality*, 251.
[2] R. J. Campbell, *City Temple Sermons*, 43.

¶ The early Christian missionaries of Scotland, on their long missionary voyages from Iona, found their burdens grow lighter, and their fears become less dismal, and their hopes break into a warm enthusiasm, when they reached the most difficult part of the way, and they said to one another, "The secret prayers of our aged master, Columba, meet us here at the points where we need them most." If we were but unchangeably confident in God we should be conscious again and again in our neediest hours of the inbreathing into our feeble life of the strength of Jesus Christ.[1]

[1] W. Watson, *Prayer*, 112.

A Man's True Life.

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A Man's True Life.

And he said unto them, Take heed, and keep yourselves from all covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.—Luke xii. 15.

1. The Evangelist connects the text with a striking yet familiar episode; "One out of the multitude said unto him, Master, bid my brother divide the inheritance with me." Here was clearly a twofold issue, moral and legal. There was the question of right and there was the question of law. The one must be answered by the individual conscience, the other by the public tribunals. Christ declines to take over the duties of either. "He said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?" Then He turned to the multitude and resumed His work as a spiritual Teacher, charged to set forward the eternal truths which conscience, however falteringly, attests, and to lay down the moral principles which underlie all human happiness worthy the name. "And he said unto them, Take heed, and keep yourselves from all covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."

2. Evidently this Jew was a younger son, who could not easily forgive his elder brother for enjoying a double share of their father's estate. The elder brother, it is plain, was also one of our Lord's hearers, and likely to be, in whatever degree, attracted by Him; but, on the other hand, it may be taken for certain that he had no mind to part with any portion of his estate, or the appeal against him would not have been necessary. "Master," cried the younger man, "speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me." Our Lord might, it is clear, have met this appeal by a direct discussion of its intrinsic merit. But in fact, placing Himself at the point of view of the speaker, who could not yet know at all that He Himself really was, He asks

what commission He could be supposed to hold for deciding such questions at all. "Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?" And then, as if glancing at both the brothers—the elder, who held so tenaciously to his legal fortune, and the younger, who was so eager to share it—He rises into a higher atmosphere, and His words become at once instructive to all men and for all time. "Take heed," He said, "and keep yourselves from all covetousness," for one reason among others, but especially for one—that covetousness involves a radical mistake as to the true meaning and nature of life: "a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."

¶ You find Christ giving various counsels to varying people, and often jealously careful to avoid definite precept. Is He asked, for example, to divide a heritage? He refuses; and the best advice that He will offer is but a paraphrase of the tenth commandment which figures so strangely among the rest. Take heed, and beware of covetousness. If you complain that this is vague, I have failed to carry you along with me in my argument. For no definite precept can be more than an illustration, though its truth were resplendent like the sun, and it was announced from heaven by the voice of God. And life is so intricate and changing, that perhaps not twenty times, or perhaps not twice in the ages, shall we find that nice consent of circumstances to which alone it can apply.[1]

I.

A False Estimate of Life.

1. Christ would warn His hearers against a false estimate of life. He told them that true life did not consist in anything external to man. Was the warning needed? Who ever said that life consisted in wealth? The saying of our Lord is a truism. But there are truisms and truisms. There are truisms which are admitted to be such in the conduct as well as by the speech of men. And there are truisms which are never questioned in conversation, and which are rarely acted on. To insist on truisms of the former class is no doubt an impertinence; to insist on truisms of this latter kind again and again, and even with importunity, is by no means superfluous; and the saying of our Lord is un-

[1] R. L. Stevenson, *Lay Morals.*

doubtedly a truism of this description. The distinction which He draws between what a man has and what he is, is as obvious, when stated, as it is commonly overlooked. The saying that life consists not in what we have but in what we are, is as true as the practice of making life consist not in what we are but in what we have is common. Intellectually speaking, the world did not need these words of our Lord. Practically speaking, there is no one of His sayings which it could less dispense with.

2. We must not read the words of our Lord as if they meant, "A man's life consists in poverty." Jesus did not say that, and it is not true; the degradations of poverty are often as great as the dangers of wealth. It is probably more difficult for a man to live "a man's life" in abject poverty than it is for him to do so amid the abundance of things. Money can do splendid service in providing the means for the cultivation of "a man's life." The pity is that so few who have it know how to compel it to do this. In the mere process of accumulation men are apt to forget the purpose of accumulation, and the hope of adding hundred to hundred, or of building more barns and larger, becomes a feverish instinct with no ulterior purpose whatever.

There is no evil in wealth itself, else our Lord had not spoken the parables of the Talents and the Pounds; and had He intended His charge to the rich young man to be a universal rule, He would certainly have represented one of the worthy servants as having given his Lord's gift to the poor. But wealth becomes evil the moment it is made the end and aim of a man's life, for it binds him to that which is temporal and physical, and blinds him to his heavenly destiny—to the things that are spiritual and eternal. As a means, however, it has as much right to its place in human life as any other gift of God; and within the kingdom which Jesus sought to found love would make its wise administration a blessing and a joy. To him for whom "it is more blessed to give than to receive" wealth must procure the greatest happiness, increasing, as it unquestionably does, his power to aid his fellows and to support all worthy causes.

¶ I said, just now, that wealth ill-used was as the net of the spider, entangling and destroying: but wealth well used is as the net of the sacred fisher who gathers souls of men out of the deep.

A time will come—I do not think even now it is far from us—when this golden net of the world's wealth will be spread abroad as the flaming meshes of morning cloud are over the sky; bearing with them the joy of light and the dew of the morning as well as the summons to honourable and peaceful toil. What less can we hope from your wealth than this, rich men of England, when once you feel fully how, by the strength of your possessions—not, observe, by the exhaustion, but by the administration of them and the power,—you can direct the acts—command the energies—inform the ignorance—prolong the existence, of the whole human race?[1]

3. But Jesus regarded wealth as quite a subordinate thing. Human law has sometimes placed property before human life. It is notorious that in our courts of justice to-day offences against the person are often much more leniently dealt with than offences against property. The judgment of Jesus, we are sure, would be very different there. In His view a man's life consisted not in his possessions; these were the accidents of his life; he had other and higher interests, and to these all His care was given. Let Him see a sick man, He was moved with compassion. Let Him see a little child, and His instinct was to take it up in His arms and bless it. Let Him see a multitude like shepherdless sheep, and He must be their Shepherd. The labours, the cares, the sorrows, the joys of men interest Him. But it is impossible to conceive of Jesus as being interested in money. "Shew me a penny," He once said, and He looked at it, not to reckon what it could purchase, but to see what it might teach. In regard even to the higher uses of money, even its most unquestionable uses as means towards food and raiment, He said, "Take no thought, labour not for these." It is certain that to Jesus money could never be worth fighting about, the loss or gain of it could never be a matter of great consequence, the decision of a question such as this could never seem worth His while. There can be little doubt that a great deal of the teaching of Jesus is diametrically opposed to the views which rule in the City and to the axioms and the aims of business life. We have come to attach vast importance, an altogether exaggerated importance, to the possession of wealth. In all the great centres of population there proceeds ceaselessly a twofold strife: there is the struggle of some for existence, a

[1] Ruskin, *A Joy for Ever*, § 120 (*Works*, xvi. 102).

desperate struggle, the incidents of which make the tragedies of every day; and there is the struggle of some for wealth—no less anxious and tragical, though far more sordid than the other. Now to both of these classes Christ speaks. He says, "Is not the life more? Are there not needs which are greater than all these? Food, raiment, comfort, luxuries—at the best they are the means of life only, and if life be given up to the acquisition of these, is it not lost?" Victor Hugo reminds us that "truth is nourishment as well as wheat." So it is undoubtedly, and it is nourishment of the nobler life. Let God come into a human life, and it becomes life indeed.

¶ The Monastic theory is at an end. It is now the Money theory which corrupts the Church, corrupts the household life, destroys honour, beauty, and life throughout the universe. It is *the* Death incarnate of Modernism, and the so-called science of its pursuit is the most cretinous, speechless, paralysing plague that has yet touched the brains of mankind.[1]

4. Our Lord even regarded the possession of wealth as a serious disadvantage. Not that the rich will be punished in the next world to make up for their happiness in this. No such crude doctrine of compensation need be thought of; but as a matter of fact, the rich did not hear Christ gladly. Their wealth did, in point of fact, keep them from joining Him. In those days, it was not easy for anyone to adopt the wandering life of Christ's disciples without first disposing of His moveable property. The suggestion to the rich young man, "Sell that thou hast," means, "Give up your fine house," not "Sell out your capital." In the East, where investments in our sense are hardly known, wealth is largely in the form of gold and trinkets, which are not easily kept safe in the absence of the owner. In these words of our Lord the emphasis should fall on the words "Come, follow me," rather than on "Sell that thou hast." No sweeping condemnation of modern capitalism can be drawn from such passages; we must consider our Lord's whole attitude towards money and its uses.

(1) Our Lord's dislike of wealth seems to be based on the fact that it almost inevitably absorbs the time and attention of its possessor, which should be given to higher things. Money makes men busy and anxious, careful and troubled about many things.

[1] Ruskin, in *Life* by E. T. Cook, ii. 129.

The rich man in His parables is either a luxurious sensualist, like Dives, or an "austere" man—a hard speculator—like the owner of the talents, or a money-spinner who intends to enjoy himself some day, like the rich fool. In each case, the rich man can have no time for the service of God, and the care of his own soul. Our Lord thinks much more of the loss to the rich man himself than of the injustice which his existence implies to the poor. The rich man forgets that life is more than a livelihood: "Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?" Our Lord pities the mammon-worshipper more than He blames him: He regards him as one who has missed his way in life—as one who, in the words of the Roman satirist, has lost, for the sake of life, all that makes life worth living.

(2) The love of money grows by that which it feeds on. Covetousness does not seem to be the temptation of those who have nothing, but rather of those who have something. Few set their hearts on riches till the riches begin to increase. "Enough" has been caustically defined as "a little more than you have." As the possession grows, the desire to possess is apt to grow in yet greater ratio. It is a sad sight, though common enough, to see how, when riches increase, a man's bounty may not only not increase but steadily decline. When that is so, it means not only that the poor suffer, or that some cause of God suffers; more than that, the man himself suffers. His spiritual manhood is blighted, and it is a blight which spreads to every part of the nature.

¶ Money grows upon men. They do not know how sweet it is until they have saved a bit, then they begin to be strangely enamoured. If they have not tasted blood they have tasted gold, and a mysterious passion begins to awake, the consequences of which none may foresee. It brings with it the sense of importance, power, large possibilities of honour and indulgence, until in the end the man is mastered by it and ruined by it, as bees are sometimes drowned in their own honey.[1]

¶ In a country parish we can often see things in their naked reality which are not seen, or not remarked, in a town. There was an old man, possessed of considerable means, who made me one of his trustees, a charge which I took for the sake of his grandchildren. I have never seen such a case of absolute slavery

[1] W. L. Watkinson, *The Gates of Dawn*, 243.

to avarice. His only daughter died next door to him, and when the water came through the roof and fell upon the bed, I suggested to him to mend the roof: and he said, "Na! Na! many a woman as good as her has had to come on the parish." Her funeral day came, and he and I were next to the hearse. Just when the little procession was about to start he cried out, "Bide a wee," and went into the house where the coffin had been lifted. I followed him, thinking he might be ill, but I found him drawing with both hands the fragments of the funeral bread into a heap which he carefully locked in a chest. Poor old man, his own time came soon after, and I did my poor best to comfort and prepare him. Within a few minutes of the end, he was earnestly trying to speak, and I bent over him to hear his last words. I thought he would be saying something that showed he was softened. What he did say was: "Tell them to buy the murnin's in Dumfries; it's a hantle cheaper than at K——'s" (the village shop).[1]

Oh what is earth, that we should build
Our houses here, and seek concealed
Poor treasure, and add field to field,
And heap to heap and store to store,
Still grasping more and seeking more,
While step by step Death nears the door?[2]

II.

What True Life Consists in.

1. It is plain that true life does not exclude the physical. There is a physical existence worth all your possessions. At least, so men have said. "Skin upon skin; yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life." Life is worth having at its lowest point. Life is worth living, if only as a stepping-stone to greater knowledge, and infinite riches, and eternal happiness. But no possessions can keep a man alive. Death knocks at the door of the castle and palace as well as at the poor man's cottage or the beggar's hut.

¶ Some of the incidents of Wesley's childhood must have deeply coloured his religion. One is the historic fire which

[1] Prof. A. H. Charteris, in *Life* by Hon. A. Gordon, 70.
[2] Christina G. Rossetti, *Poems*, 197.

consumed Epworth rectory in 1709, when Wesley was not yet six years old. On the midnight of August 24, 1709, it was discovered to be in flames. The rest of the household made a hurried and scorched escape, but John, in the alarm and hurry, was forgotten. The little fellow awoke to find the room so full of light that he thought it was day; he sprang from the bed and ran to the door, but it was already a dreadful tapestry of dancing flames. The strong wind, blowing through the open door, had turned the staircase into a tunnel of flame; the father found it would be death to climb it. He fell on his knees in the hall, and cried aloud to God for the child that seemed shut up in a prison of flame. Mrs. Wesley herself, who was ill, had—to use her own phrase—"waded through the fire," and reached the street, with scorched hands and face; as she turned to look back at the house the face of her little son could be seen at the window. He was still in the burning house! There was no ladder; his escape seemed impossible. One man, with more resource than the rest of the crowd, ran in beneath the window, and bade another climb upon his shoulders. The boy was reached and, just as he was drawn through the window, he heard the crash of the falling roof behind him. "Come, neighbours," cried the father, when his child was brought to him, "let us kneel down! Let us give thanks to God! He has given me all my eight children. Let the house go. I am rich enough."[1]

2. But life is more than physical existence, more than the pleasures of sense. It is character—what a man, when stripped of his possessions, is before God. The life spoken of here is intensive, not expansive. Measured by what we are, and not by what we have, is Christ's rule. You may find a shrivelled soul in the midst of a great fortune, and a noble soul in the barest poverty. Life before possessions!

> In vain do men
> The heavens of their fortune's fault accuse,
> Sith they know best what is the best for them;
> For they to each such fortune do diffuse.
> As they do know each can most aptly use:
> For not that which men covet most is best,
> Nor that thing worst which men do most refuse,
> But fittest is that all contented rest
> With that they hold; each hath his fortune in his breast.

[1] W. H. Fitchett, *Wesley and his Century*, 32.

It is the mind that maketh good or ill,
That maketh wretch or happy, rich or poor;
For some, that hath abundance at his will,
Hath not enough, but wants in greatest store;
And other, that hath little, asks no more,
But in that little is both rich and wise;
For wisdom is most riches; fools therefore
They are which fortunes do by vows devise,
Sith each unto himself his life may fortunize.[1]

(1) A man's life consists in the abundance of the things he knows.

¶ I was once the guest, for a little time, of a man who owned a magnificent art gallery. But he could say more than "I have these pictures." He could say "I know them." He had a marvellous pipe-organ in his house. But he could say more than "I have the organ." He could say "I know the organ, its sweetness and its power." Some men are content to say "I have this, that, and the other beautiful thing." He is not so; he says, "These books—I know them; these flowers—I know them; they seem to me like children; they have a speech that is all their own, and I understand it." By the things we know, our reason is enriched, and we are to live in our reason. We are to know the meaning of things is no less substantial than the things themselves. We are to know the things below us—that is power. We are to know the things about us—that is culture. We are to know the things above us—that is character.[2]

(2) A man's life consists in the abundance of the things he does.

He who plants a tree
Plants a hope;
Rootlets up through fibres blindly grope,
Leaves unfold unto horizon free.
So man's life must climb
From the clouds of time
Unto heavens sublime.
Canst thou prophesy, thou little tree,
What the glory of thy boughs shall be?

He who plants a tree,
He plants love;
Tents of coolness spreading out above
Wayfarers he may not live to see.

[1] Spenser, *The Faerie Queene.*
[2] C. C. Albertson, *The Gospel according to Christ*, 143.

Gifts that grow are best,
Hands that bless are blest;
Plant! Life does the rest.
Heaven and earth helps him who plants a tree,
And his work its own reward shall be.[1]

(3) A man's life consists in the abundance of the things he loves.

¶ Walt Whitman was a strange man. He may have been a degenerate. But his degeneracy had genius in it, and he left a name that will never die. He once said, "I love God and flowers and little children." Was there any such thing as bankruptcy for him? Not so long as God sits upon His throne, and flowers spring up in every meadow, and little children smile. Whitman was poor, but he lived an abundant life, for his inner resources were inexhaustible.[2]

¶ Shields' old friend, the Rev. Hugh Chapman, who had ministered to him in his last days, said at the funeral service at Merton Old Church: "After a friendship of twenty-five years, I have no hesitation in saying that Frederic Shields knew and lived on his Bible as few whom I can recall. Literalist to a large extent he ever was, however mystically inclined in his rôle of artist, and there was about him somewhat of the rugged Covenanter who brooked no compromise where for him the honour of his Master seemed to be concerned. Severe to himself, he was infinitely tender towards those who suffered, nor could he hear the mention of pain without his eyes filling with tears. For those who knew him well, and who had sounded the depths of his remarkable personality, he had a unique charm, nor could you be with him for long without leaving his presence a better man. Frederic Shields hated money as much as he loved God, and it is these two points which stand out as I think of him now, promoted to his well-earned rest."[3]

3. We can possess of outward things only as much as we can use. God has endowed man with certain faculties and gifts, which are to be exercised and developed by certain things which this world of His produces. Our bodies are to be sustained and developed by lawful food; and for them Mother Earth caters by her yearly supply of the good things of the harvest. Our minds are to be cultivated and matured by observation and study, and

[1] Lucy Larcom.
[2] C. C. Albertson, *The Gospel according to Christ*, 144.
[3] E. Mills, *Frederic Shields*, 347.

for these God's book of nature and the works of genius, the broad fields of history and human experience are the pasture-grounds in which the human soul is to feed. We have, moreover, a spiritual character to develop; and for that, Jesus is the very bread of our life. But neither body, soul, nor spirit of man or woman, possesses anything which it does not take up into itself, and utilize by making part of its being. The demands of the body are satisfied when it has used certain elements of food; but all food besides is for the time being practically nothing to the body, because it can use no more.

¶ Wealth is a tremendous trust; it becomes a dangerous one when it owns its owner. Our Brooklyn philanthropist, the late Mr. Charles Pratt, once said to me: "There is no greater humbug than the idea that the mere possession of wealth makes any man happy. I never got any happiness out of mine until I began to do good with it."[1]

¶ As a teacher wandered in Qualheim, he came into a mountainous region, and saw a castle which was of dream-like beauty. "Who is the enviable man who lives in such a palace?" he asked. His guide answered: "He is an unhappy, helpless hermit, without peace, and without a home. He was born with great artistic gifts, but employed them on rubbish. He drew nonsensical and trifling caricatures, distorted all that was beautiful into ugliness, and all that was great into pettiness."

"How does he occupy himself now?"

"Shall I say it? He sits from morning till evening, making balls out of dung."

"You mean to say, he continues as he began. Is that his punishment?"

"Yes! Isn't it logical? He obtained the castle, but cannot use it." Then they went further and came into a garden, where they found a man grafting peaches on turnips. "What has he done?" asked the teacher. "In life he was specially fond of turnips, and now he wishes to inoculate peaches, which he finds insipid, with the fine flavour of turnips. He was, moreover, an author, and wished to rejuvenate poetry with bawdy peasant songs." "Why, that is symbolism!" "Yes, and logic most of all."[2]

4. The true life, coming from God, is satisfying and is not bounded by this world. According to Christ's teaching "a man's

[1] Theodore Cuyler, *Recollections of a Long Life*, 274.

[2] A. Strindberg, *Zones of the Spirit*, 103.

life" consists in the cultivation of the possibilities, of the highest elements of his being, in the annihilation within it of all low desires, in the full set of its determination on the highest ideals, in the cultivation of that power of vision and of feeling by which a man comes to apprehend God and has a sense of the spiritual world, in the maturing of the faculty for drawing enjoyment from those sources which the world cannot dry up. To do that is to know what "a man's life" means, and to do less than that is to live the life of an animal and not "a man's life" at all; and, unless the world's best men and women have been its greatest liars, to live a life like that is unspeakably magnificent and satisfying.

¶ A man may pay too dearly for his livelihood, by giving, in Thoreau's terms, his whole life for it, or, in mine, bartering for it the whole of his available liberty, and becoming a slave till death. There are two questions to be considered—the quality of what we buy, and the price we have to pay for it. Do you want a thousand a year, a two thousand a year, or a ten thousand a year livelihood? and can you afford the one you want? It is a matter of taste; it is not in the least degree a question of duty, though commonly supposed so. But there is no authority for that view anywhere. It is nowhere in the Bible. It is true that we might do a vast amount of good if we were wealthy, but it is also highly improbable; not many do; and the art of growing rich is not only quite distinct from that of doing good, but the practice of the one does not at all train a man for practising the other.[1]

> Is not the body more than meat? The soul
> Is something greater than the food it needs.
> Prayers, sacraments, and charitable deeds,
> They realize the hours that onward roll
> Their endless way "to kindle or control."
> Our acts and words are but the pregnant needs
> Of future being, when the flowers and weeds,
> Local and temporal, in the vast whole
> Shall live eternal. Nothing ever dies!
> The shortest smile that flits across a face,
> Which lovely grief hath made her dwelling-place,
> Lasts longer than the earth or visible skies!
> It is an act of God, whose acts are truth,
> And vernal still in everlasting youth.[2]

[1] R. L. Stevenson, *Familiar Studies of Men and Books.*

[2] Hartley Coleridge.

III.

The Way to True Life.

1. Our Lord would have nothing to do with the paltry dispute between the two brothers. And yet, in the great truth which He proceeded to enunciate with regard to what constitutes life, there was the solution—the Divine solution—of the particular problem raised on the occasion and of all similar problems. "What about my inheritance?" was the question of him who viewed life from the worldly standpoint. "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth," was the answer of Him who viewed life from above. This, in effect, was what Christ said, "Man, I am not a judge or a divider over you in things temporal and material. But listen to what I have to say as to the things which constitute real and true life, and you will not trouble yourself any longer about this inheritance."

It was as if Christ had said, as He read the story of that angered and greedy spirit, "Man, my word is not to your brother: it is to you. Beware of covetousness. You are afraid of losing some property: but the thing you really stand to lose this day with your hate and your greed is your own soul. You are giving all the thought of your life to something that cannot satisfy you if you get it. Moreover, look into your own heart and confess yourself full of greed. Confess that if you could get the whole inheritance to-morrow and oust your brother, you would do it. It will take vastly more than getting that field to put your life right." Thus to a narrow and twisted and unhallowed passion that was distorting this man's life Jesus applied a calm, eternal principle. He let in upon the lurid thought of this man's mind the calm and perfect light of truth and love.

For there are two ways of reforming men—an external and an internal. The first method pronounces decisions, formulates laws, changes governments, and thus settles all moral and political questions. The second seeks, before everything else, to renovate the heart and the will. Jesus Christ chose the latter plan. He remained steadfast to it, and this alone evinces the Divinity of His mission and the permanent value of His work. Suppose for a moment that He had adopted the former method when these

brothers came to Him, what would have happened? His decision would only have settled a matter of civil right and would not have changed their hearts. If love and justice are to triumph, the two brothers, moved by the Saviour's teaching, must themselves settle their difference amicably and equitably. No doubt this was the victory Christ sought to achieve.

2. Now Christ taught the way to a true life by fixing men's thoughts upon Himself. He claimed to be life, and He declared that His mission was to give life in abundance. To have life, then, is to possess Christ, to be actuated by His motives, to reveal His trend of character and passion for goodness. This we can do by coming under the influence of His Spirit.

¶ I read one day about the influence of a man over a peculiarly savage deer-hound. By persistent kindness he taught it to trust and to obey him, and gradually under his influence its whole nature was changed. Instead of being savage it became gentle, instead of being treacherous it became trustworthy. It came, through his influence, to live an entirely different life; and we might say with truth that it came to share the man's life through trust and obedience. The analogy is, of course, a very imperfect one, but it is surely by no means either irreverent or unreasonable to find in such an incident an illustration of what Jesus meant when He said, "He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life; but he that obeyeth not the Son shall not see life." "He that followeth me shall have the light of life." For it is verily true that the moment a man begins to trust and to obey and to follow, that moment he begins to share the ageless life of the Master, which has its roots in union with God and love for men.[1]

3. This life can be strengthened in worship. And that means, not merely to engage in certain ceremonial acts on a Sunday, but to cultivate the habit of response to all that is beautiful and noble in nature and history and literature and art and everywhere. The mere lapse of years, to eat and drink and sleep, to be exposed to darkness and to light, to pace round the mill of habit and "turn thought into an implement of trade," to taste to exhaustion sensuous delights—this is not life, but death disguised; but if men will be loyal to conscience and cultivate the habit of true worship, they shall know the meaning of joy, they shall know

[1] R. J. Wardell.

the meaning of peace, they shall know the meaning of strength, they shall know the meaning and feel the fulness of that "life which is life indeed."

4. But, again, to enjoy this life, we must not keep it to ourselves; we must expend it in the interests of our fellow-men. Possession falls under the great law of distribution. To get we must give. Nothing is put into the hand of men that is not intended to be used for the good of society. The handful of corn is of small value in itself if put under lock and key, but, handed over to the ministry of nature, it may in due time become a great harvest. Distribution is not loss; it is only another form of gain. "He which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully."

Men ask whether they may not do what they please with their own. The answer is "Certainly, but you must first find what is your own." "Is not my money my own?" "Certainly not, your very hand with which you grasp your pelf is not your own. The hand may have made the money, but who made the hand?" If anything is our own, how singular it is that we cannot take it away with us! The property is ours only that we may leave it. We brought nothing into this world and it is certain that we can carry nothing out.

¶ To Mr. Morley, wealth was only a means to an end; he valued it only as it could be employed for noble purposes; he held it in trust for the good of others; he felt that it laid upon him the most binding obligations, and that he was accountable not only for making a right use of it, but the best use possible. The distribution of his money was therefore the main business of his life. It was a great responsibility to have the management of such a business as his; it was a far greater responsibility to have the money that business brought him. To accumulate it for its own sake was utterly foreign to his thought and feeling; to amass it for the highest ends, and be neglectful as to its wise distribution, was, in his view, worse than folly; to shirk the responsibility, and make others the almoners of his munificence, he regarded as being unfaithful to the trust reposed in him by the One "who giveth power to get wealth." Mere giving, however enormous the amount bestowed, is, in itself, nothing, and may be worse than nothing. It may be done selfishly, simply to gratify an impulse; it may be done pompously, simply to gratify pride. As Lavater says, "The manner of giving shows the character of the giver more than the gift itself." Therefore, when Mr. Morley found

riches to increase, he felt it to be a religious duty to make the disposal of his money a matter of earnest and most careful solicitude. There was placed in his hands a mighty power for good or for evil, and he felt himself under obligation to God and man to spare no pains in using it to the best advantage for the Church and the world.[1]

[1] E. Hodder, *Life of Samuel Morley*, 285.

The Narrow Door.

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The Narrow Door.

Strive to enter in by the narrow door: for many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able.—Luke xiii. 24.

This solemn warning was provoked by a very simple inquiry. One disciple ventured to put into words the question which often rises up, unbidden, in the hearts of us all: "Lord, are there few that be saved?" What could be more natural and innocent to ask? Yet in Christ's ears the question sounded almost frivolous, and He rebuked it by grave, stern sentences which drove home on the questioner's conscience the urgency of his own salvation. Our Lord could never tolerate the theological speculations in which men dissipate their religious earnestness and fritter away their spiritual energies. When we go to Him with our eager questionings about the future, He always brings us back to the unspeakable seriousness of our own present. When we ask Him about the end of the world and the date of the judgment day, we hear Him answer:

"Let your loins be girded about, and your lamps burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord." "What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch." And so also when we speculate over the destiny of those heathen multitudes who have lived and died without the true Light, the New Testament straightway recalls us to our personal accountability: "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light." "Walk as children of light." And again, when we strive to peer into God's final secrets and to forecast the latter end of all souls, we are arrested by these piercing, heart-searching words, and bidden to strive to enter by the door.

Let us ask—

I. What Door is This?

II. How are we to Enter?

I.

What Door is This?

The door to which Christ refers is the entrance into His Kingdom. By this figure He places before His hearers the great alternatives of life, and summons them to decision. There are two gates, two ways, two goals, two sides of the throne, two kinds of foundation for the house we build: and we have to make our choice between them. We can go in at the strait gate, or at the wide gate, but not at both. We can travel in the broad way, or the narrow way, but not in both. We can build on the rock, or on the sand, but not on both. We shrink from making this decisively plain to ourselves, that the decisiveness of our action or inaction may also remain veiled; but it is implied even in this foolish question; it is emphasized in our Lord's answer; and it is the one conviction without which thought on this subject is fruitless. The ideas we have formed of salvation and perdition, of life saved and life lost, of the bright banqueting-hall and the outer darkness, of heaven and hell, may be erroneous enough; but there can be no reason for thinking of such things at all, and as little profit in it, unless we feel that in the very nature of the case these are alternatives which for ever exclude each other. Christ's answer bears directly on this, and is wholly plain and practical. "Strive to enter in by the narrow door."

1. This is a narrow door. In the Authorized Version it is called a "strait gate," and the term "strait" is, of course, quite a different word from "straight." Straight means that which is not crooked; strait is an old-fashioned word meaning narrow. We find the same word used by our Lord in Matt. vii. 13, 14; and there He explains fully what the strait gate means. "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life." The strait gate and the narrow way mean the way of eternal life, the way of salvation, the gate or entrance to the Kingdom.

The gate is strait to our weak, unwilling nature, however gloriously open and free in itself. It is too low for pride, which will not come down from its high horse to enter on foot like a beggar, or like a little child. It is too narrow for philosophy, for

the wisdom of this world; it is too definite, exclusive, and dogmatic. It is too strait for earthliness and greed. The rich man cannot bring his gear and his gains in with him, and so from the very threshold he turns away sorrowful, for he has great possessions.

¶ There was a man—a lean, cold, spectral man—never sunny, genial, poetical, for a day in his life; skin and bone—skin and bone. And they called him a Pharisee. He stood in all his erect leanness, and said how often he fasted, what tithes he paid, and what an excellent man he was. Jesus Christ said, "Well, you cannot go in at this gate. You will have to lay down and trample under foot all that fasting and tithe-paying, all that excellent virtue, for 'strait is the gate'!" A man has to lay down a great deal before he can get through this gate. He has to take a great many idols out of his pockets and throw them away; then to go through the chambers of his mind and take out theory after theory, by the hundred, and blow them away. Except ye be converted and become as little children—simple-minded, gentle, pure, loving, trustful children—ye cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. Great, tall men, who believe in themselves—who are afraid they will knock their heads against the stars if they stand right up—cannot, cannot get in. The gate truly is strait and the way narrow![1]

(1) The way is called narrow in opposition to the wide gate, and the wide gate is not so hard to understand. A wide gate is one through which you can pass easily, carrying what you please, and no questions are asked. That, Jesus tells us, is the kind of gate which opens on the way that leads to destruction. You can go in with your money, your pride, your sloth, your appetites, your vices, whatever you please. Nothing is excluded, and there is no toll. The consequence is that many do go in. The wide gate is always busy; the broad way thronged with travellers. You can drift in with the stream, you can have the pleasant sense of being well supported; you can maintain a certain self-respect by pointing to the large numbers of people, of all possible capacities, tastes, and characters, who have taken that way. Nevertheless, it leads to destruction.

¶ Moshesh, the Basuto chief, played fast and loose with the missionaries, giving himself up to the devices of the magicians,

[1] Joseph Parker.

and in particular to those of a prophetess called Mantsupha. This witch declared she worshipped the same God as the missionaries, but that, as she had herself been up to Heaven, her information was first-hand, whereas theirs was only second-hand from a book. This information was, first, that polygamy was lawful; secondly, that the way to heaven was not a narrow way, as the missionaries maintained, but a very broad way, for as God was the Supreme Chief, many people must always be coming and going from this place, and consequently the road had to be very wide indeed.

It was about four months before his death, five years later, that Moshesh gave tokens of a real spiritual change. The missionaries had almost ceased to hope for this. One day towards the close of 1869, M. Jousse came to see him, and he begged him to read the Bible. The passage chosen was the 14th of John. It had always been a favourite with the old chief, who when he came to the sixth verse repeated it after him: "No man cometh unto the Father, but by me." "Son of Mokachane," said M. Jousse, "a throne is prepared for you in heaven; believe in Jesus the Saviour of the world, and you will be there."

It was just as if he heard the message of salvation for the first time. A heaven opened to the sinner, and a Saviour who presents it to us—these were the two ideas he grasped. After the missionary left he had this passage read to him again, and reproached the Christians round him with having concealed the Way of Salvation from him, though he had heard it hundreds of times. In the middle of the same night he sent some of them to M. Jousse to say, "Moshesh declares himself a Christian." M. Jousse at once came, and the next day sent to four other missionaries, who all visited Moshesh and were astounded at the reality of the change they witnessed. He summoned each of his sons to his bedside to hear his testimony. He also sent for the prophetess Mantsupha, the same who had declared the road to heaven was a broad road and who since then had herself become a Christian. Taking both her hands he said, "My sister, my sister, we both come from very far off, but now we must both walk in the narrow way."[1]

(2) The narrow door is the door of renunciation, and it is left for every man to say what in his case must be renounced before he can enter. No sin can go through: the narrow door calls for repentance, and renunciation of evil. No sham can go through: it demands renunciation of acted insincerity, and a humble resolve

[1] O. W. Mackintosh, *Coillard of the Zambesi*, 191.

to walk in the truth. No compromising relations with evil can go through, no tenderness for old associations which ignore God, no disposition to fret or pity ourselves; and hence for some there is no entrance unless they pluck out a right eye, cut off a right hand or a right foot, and enter halt or maimed or blind rather than stay outside. To come to the narrow door is to feel that what lies beyond is the one thing needful, and that it is a good bargain, for the sake of it, to renounce all that has ever been dear to us.

Christ here reminds us that the commonest of all temptations is that of making our religion easy. But the path of serious moral effort can never be other than narrow and arduous. And here, as in other things, it is the first step that costs so much. Someone has said that "though it is hard to become a Christian, it is easy to be a Christian." This means, I suppose, that it is the initial stage of a Christian life that is supremely tasking. The struggle is to enter in through the narrow door of renunciation. Christ's purpose here is to make us feel that in the case of every child of man some such struggle is imperative. The old apologue of the choice of Hercules was more profoundly true than was suspected by pagan fathers who taught it to their children. All moral life involves a choice between two distinct alternatives. And Christian life is arduous, because renunciation stands at its threshold; and no one, however he may seek to do so, can enter the Kingdom of God without the serious effort and struggle implied in preferring to the easy way of self-pleasing the rough and difficult pathway of duty.

¶ The whole career of Christian in the *Pilgrim's Progress* carries out the ideas of the wicket gate and the narrow way leading to life, on which few enter, and in which fewer still persevere to the end. Bunyan realized the gravity and the perils of the spiritual quest in a fashion which is hardly popular to-day. He would have endorsed every syllable of Browning's sentence: "How very hard it is to be a Christian!" The consecrated life of self-surrender and self-denial taxes to their utmost all the highest powers of the soul.

Let no man think that sudden in a minute
All is accomplished and the work is done;—
Though with thine earliest dawn thou shouldst begin it
Scarce were it ended in thy setting sun.

We pervert the Gospel, when we preach it as a broad gate and a smooth way, when we practise it by shunning the thorns and choosing the flowers.[1]

¶ If ignorance and passion are the foes of popular morality, it must be confessed that moral indifference is the malady of the cultivated classes. The modern separation of enlightenment and virtue, of thought and conscience, of the intellectual aristocracy from the honest and vulgar crowd, is the greatest danger that can threaten liberty. When any society produces an increasing number of literary exquisites, of satirists, sceptics and *beaux esprits*, some chemical disorganization of fabric may be inferred. What was it that Mephistopheles lacked? Not intelligence certainly but goodness.[2]

2. Look at life and ask what high and noble achievement there is, the doing of which does not make the same severe demands that Christ makes on His followers. Art and science and literature require of their votaries the homage of an undivided heart. Before supreme excellence can be attained in any pursuit or calling the price has to be paid to the uttermost farthing. Professional life is a winnowing, selecting process that works with automatic energy; and it is a patent fact of observation that in all things requiring strain and effort the few succeed, the many fail. Everywhere in every department of human activity the same spectacle meets the eye; the broad, smooth road of ease and popularity is thronged by the multitudes who are contented to take life as they find it, while the narrow path of strenuous endeavour is trodden by the self-renouncing few.

¶ The artist must bring to his work the ardour of the young lover or the missionary. No matter what his artistic organization, if he is satisfied with a few hours' hard work—no matter how hard—and can throw thought of it aside and say he has done enough for the day and will throw aside "shop"; not for him will be a place on the highest level for all time.[3]

3. The door, though narrow, is now open. The entrance is without money and without price. There are no conditions imposed by Him who set it open, and one great difficulty is to convince the entrants that there must be no conditions self-

[1] T. H. Darlow, *The Upward Calling*, 47.
[2] Amiel's *Journal Intime*.
[3] *George Frederic Watts*, i. 84.

imposed by them. This gate is perfectly open to all who come just as they are. For there are no limits in the invitation, no conditions in the coming, and no objections to the comers. Hear the King's own word: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden." Could words be plainer, sweeter, than these? If there were not another word, were not this enough? But, as if to anticipate every possible objection, He adds: "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." The door is not narrow in the sense of keeping out any who come as they are invited. The thirsty comer never found the fountain sealed. The purseless comer never was denied the wine and milk because he brought no price—he was expressly told to come purseless. The beggar from the highway has never wanted room at this banquet because he came in rags to the door; the weary and the heavy-laden never came and were refused rest; the greatest sinner that ever lived will not come in vain—when he comes as the chief of sinners, to be saved.

¶ Dr. John Paton, the great missionary to the New Hebrides, tells us in his autobiography a very tender incident. He tells us that his brother Walter was a sailor, that he went to sea when quite a young lad, and that after a voyage or two no more was heard of him. The sea has great secrets to tell some day. But that mother's heart could never conclude that she would never see her boy's face again. At least she resolved that, should he ever come by day or by night, there would be a welcome for him at the old fireside. And so the last thing she did every night before she retired to rest was to take the door off the latch and leave it open to admit the lost boy. Should he ever come, even in the midnight, there was to be no bar against his entrance. And that mother's heart was only a faint picture of what the great Father's heart is in Jesus Christ.

4. But the door, now open, will be shut one day, and the effort to enter will be unavailing. Many do not seek entrance till it is too late. What a time to begin to think of entering—when the Master of the house has risen and shut-to the door! Is a man to keep God and the universe in everlasting suspense? Is the world to wait for ever to see whether I will make up my mind? If not, there is the possibility of beginning too late; of refusing to be serious till the door is shut, and seriousness no longer avails.

"To-day, if ye shall hear his voice, harden not your hearts." Delay becomes fatal, because it begets irresolution, and nothing more easily than irresolution becomes chronic, incurable, irreparable. Decent people probably lose more by it than by all the sins they confess put together. They lose eternal life by it when it makes them, as it eventually does, incapable of the grand decisive renunciation by which alone we can pass the strait gate.

¶ J. M. Barrie has given us in *A Window in Thrums* a very pathetic picture of Jamie's homecoming. When some of the neighbours saw Jamie prowling about in the gloaming near the old home, his face seemed to them like that of a man who had come "straucht frae hell." He had gone back to the old home. He meant to go back in penitence to find safety and rest, at the old fireside, and in the shelter of a mother's wounded but forgiving and tender love; but he was too late. The door of the old cottage was shut upon all that, and father and mother and sister were gathered to God, and he was alone.

"There is a nest of thrushes in the glen;
 When we come back we'll see the glad young things,"
He said. We came not by that way again,
 And Time and thrushes fare on eager wings!

"Yon rose"—she smiled—"but no, when we return,
 I'll pluck it then." 'Twas on a summer day.
The ashes of the rose in Autumn's urn
 Lie hidden well. We came not back that way.

We do not pass the selfsame way again,
 Or, passing by that way, nothing we find
As it before had been; but death, or stain,
 Hath come upon it, or the wasteful wind.

The very earth is envious, and her arms
 Reach for the beauty that detained our eyes;
Yea, it is lost, beyond the aid of charms,
 If, once within our grasp, we leave the prize.

Thou traveller to the unknown Ocean's brink,
 Through Life's fair fields, say not, "Another day
This joy I'll prove": for never, as I think,
 Never shall we come back this selfsame way!

II.

How are we to Enter?

1. "Strive to enter in." Our Lord turns from the speculative question to the practical one, and declares that effectual salvation must begin in strenuous personal action. Whether many or few attain final blessedness is not an issue fixed by a Divine decree into which we may venture to probe, but rests with each separate seeker after life. In so many words, the Great Teacher says, "Before you concern yourselves with your neighbours' destiny, and that of the race, look well to your own soul." Does not the Master, for the moment, here seem to put Himself on the side of spiritual selfishness? Such counsels run counter to some things we hear at the present time, and half justify the taunt directed against the evangelical faith of our fathers that its one watchword was, "Give heed to yourself first and make sure of heaven." But no broad survey of the words of Jesus can justify the criticism that, in caring for the spiritual state of the individual, He overlooks the multitude. To give heed to ourselves may be the noblest way of serving our neighbours. By zealously working out individual salvation, we shall further, with supreme success, the spiritual well-being of the community.

2. Our Lord places momentous emphasis upon struggle. The word "agonize" which He employs suggests the fierce desperate onset of the wrestler. In modern usage the word has come to stand for keen, bitter suffering, but it implied, at first, the tension of effort in the man himself, rather than the burden of pain laid upon him. He who would enter the Kingdom and find himself secure from all that threatens his well-being, must be a Samson Agonistes. Like Jacob, by the brook Jabbok, he must contend. The strong-willed, dauntless wrestler, whose heart dilates, whose muscles are stretched, whose veins expand, and who puts the entire weight of his body into the work, is the type of the spirit which cannot fail of salvation. A one-sided presentation of the gospel may sometimes depict this supreme task as free from hardship and difficulty. To do some things is child's play, because no barriers lie across the pathway by which we move.

Formidable forces, however, bar our progress towards the door which is set before us—the terrible and diversified autocracies of unseen evil, principalities, powers, and the rulers of the darkness of this world; worst of all, in the heart of a man himself they too often find an ally. Sin is no trifling purposeless accident in the history of an irresponsible race, but a camp of unholy legions wedged in between man and his highest destinies, and it must needs be overthrown. He who does not put his whole strength into the task, and that right early, will irretrievably fail.

¶ To send a consumptive nurse to minister to consumptives would be a hollow and extravagant affectation of altruism. Her highest duty is to care for herself and recover the health which fits for service. When the fire-alarm rings a dozen streets away, no one expects the patients in a fever-ward, or in an infectious hospital, to answer the call. It is humanity for all such to stay within bounds till they are convalescent. They may give a hand in putting out the next fire. It is no mark of barbarism to quarantine a plague-stricken ship, even though Red Cross doctors, on the way to the battlefield, may be amongst the passengers. We must save ourselves, before curiously dropping our plummet into the mysteries of the last things, and working out in a curious sum the ratio of the redeemed to the reprobate.[1]

¶ We have all been thrilled with the story of Lucknow in the war of the Indian Mutiny. An English army was mustering on the banks of the Jumna, eager to reach the Oudh capital; but the mutineers in force guarded every approach. At last Havelock thought he was strong enough to try. He made a gallant effort to break the iron circle,—striking boldly, doing his utmost; but in vain. He had to wait for reinforcements. When these came he tried again. Every inch of ground, as it were, he had to battle for. Slowly, painfully, in agonies of conflict, he made his way. And though, when he at last succeeded and reached the beleaguered city, there was boundless welcome for him, it might well be said that he had to agonize through "a strait gate" to his waiting and longing countrymen. So must *we agonize to enter* the Kingdom of Heaven.[2]

3. This call to a more vehement strife after salvation derives much of its intenseness and solemnity from that significant hour in the Master's own history and in the redemptive destinies of

[1] T. G. Selby, *The Strenuous Gospel*, 191.
[2] *James Walker of Carnwath*, 325.

mankind which was so near at hand. The Son of Man had passed that last turn in His pathway which brought the cross into view, and His sensibilities already felt the strain and oppression of the great tragedy. It seemed to Him scarcely conceivable that men could be saved unless they entered into the inwardness of His redemptive passion. He had set Himself to work out the deliverance of the race, through conflict and infinite distress, and the experience of reconciliation with God in each individual member of the race must needs come through a conscious oneness with Himself. Salvation cannot be made so easy by the vicarious act of another that the recipient of it is released from all obligation to strive.

¶ Just as the tremors of the earth are registered by fine instruments placed in a modern observatory, so the cross was a sensitive seismograph in which the forces battling to frustrate and overthrow the Divine in man, displayed all their rage and convulsion. As the Son of Man hung there He felt within Himself the fierce tumultuous upheavings of the nethermost hell, and he endured the cross by a strong transcendent counterpassion. It was inconceivable that the forces which asserted themselves in the crisis of the agony, and were even now rending His sacred soul, would leave the individual to work out his salvation without stress or friction.[1]

¶ The true cross of the Redeemer was the sin and sorrow of this world; that was what lay heavy on His heart, and that is the cross we shall share with Him, that is the cup we must drink of with Him if we would have any part in that Divine love which is one with His sorrow.[2]

¶ Our chemists liquefy atmospheric air by applying portentously cold temperatures, two or three hundred degrees below freezing-point, and it has been found that under these ultra-Arctic conditions chemical reactions are no longer possible. The sun's rays lose their actinic power. A lecturer at the Royal Institution several years ago exposed to the light sensitized paper, parts of which had been sponged with liquid air. The parts untouched were changed in tint, as in the ordinary processes of photography, but the sponged parts were proof against the action of the sunbeams. In these phenomenally low temperatures substances, which have the most violent chemical affinity for each other, refuse to combine. And is there not a corresponding fact in the

[1] T. G. Selby, *The Strenuous Gospel*, 195. [2] George Eliot.

sphere of religion? Whilst our natures are abnormally cold the intensest emanations from the Light of the World cannot transform us; the likeness of His death and resurrection fails to imprint itself on our natures.[1]

[1] T. G. Selby, *The Strenuous Gospel*, 196.

The Return to the Father.

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The Return to the Father.

But when he came to himself he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight: I am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father.—Luke xv. 17-20.

1. This is one of a group of three parables which our Lord delivered at one time, for one purpose, while He sat surrounded by representatives of three great classes of listeners.

First, Jesus had of course close around Him the circle of His chosen Apostles. To them it was a parable of *faith*—of the faith they were about to be sent forth to preach to all the children of God scattered abroad. Secondly, pressing eagerly through the disciples, who had been taught by the Lord not to repel them, there "drew unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him"; that is, the great world of sinners, who knew themselves to be sinners, but in whom (because they are not self-righteous) the Incarnate Word discerned a readiness for repentance and faith. To them—despairing of themselves, and encouraged in their despair by their teachers—it was, above everything, a parable of *hope*. Thirdly, this parable was heard by those who counted themselves righteous and despised others. Present as critics, not as hungering and thirsting learners, the group of Pharisees stood aloof. Having no sympathy with humanity at large, they murmured at the Son of Man for giving welcome to an audience which included prostitutes and cheats. To them it was certainly a parable of *charity*.

2. The parable has been aptly and beautifully called "the evangel within the evangel"—the heart of the Gospel of Jesus. If our Lord had only appeared on earth and given utterance to

this one gracious story, He would have conferred on humanity an unspeakable boon and completely altered our views of God and man, of sin and of destiny. The salient message of the parable is unmistakable. The hunger at the heart of God for the return of the prodigal and the hunger at the heart of the prodigal for God and home—that is the broad, patent, outstanding truth.

The thoughts suggested by the passage may be grouped under three titles—

I. Reflection.
II. Repentance.
III. Restoration.

I.

Reflection.

"When he came to himself." The prodigal had not been himself when he begged his father to advance him his patrimony, nor when he wasted his substance in riotous living. During that unhappy time, when he wandered into a far country, and consorted with swine, and human beings who lived like swine, he had lost or forgotten himself. As soon as he came to himself, he rose and went to his father. So then, according to our Lord's parable, a man turns to God at once when his mind is in a healthy state. It is natural for man to be religious; and if he is not, there is probably something wrong with him.

For religion is holiness, and holiness is health. When some one whom we love is cross or irritable, we say of him, "He's not himself to-day." When one whom we have known for years does something unworthy, we say, "Ah, that's not himself at all." And what is that but our instinctive certainty that a man is more than his vices or his failures, and that if we want to know him as he is, we must take him at the level of his best? It was always thus that Jesus judged humanity. He was a magnificent and a consistent optimist. He never made light of sin, never condoned it. To Him it was always terrible and tragic. But then the sinner was not the real man; sin was a bondage, a tyranny, a madness; and it was when the tyranny of sin was broken that a man came to his true self.

1. The prodigal's repentance began in a self-colloquy—an interior conversation, an examination of his conscience by himself: it is a confession to himself. Repentance always begins in thoughtful interior soliloquy; and all soliloquy, as Shaftesbury has said in his *Characteristics*, is an inward dialogue, is really a colloquy. The profoundest and the purest thinking of individual men has not only been in this form, but it has been communicated to their fellow-men, and handed over to our use in the shape of dialogue. The work of Socrates was done by dialogue. The written works of Plato are cast in the form of conversations, in which it is plain that he has made himself the thinker in each converser. It is enough to say that Shakespeare is a dramatist, and that Faust is a play. The most universally used and the most helpful of all ascetical treatises, *The Imitation of Christ*, is given for our use in the form of interior colloquies. The younger brother of God's household, the Gentile Humanity, summed up in the famous words, "Know thyself," the conclusion of his search for the right end of human thinking. The elder brother, Circumcised Humanity, utters the same conclusion in the words of his own Psalmist, "Commune with thine own heart." "O what heaps of filth," cries one who has entered as deeply into the Gentile spirit as into the Jewish spirit, "and what foul disorder there must necessarily be in a breast which is never looked into!"[1]

¶ There is hope for the worst of men if they begin to reflect. Reflection is the first step on the ladder which leads a sinner up to God—the first step on the bridge which he crosses over to return to God. The Scripture bids us "consider our ways." This is what the prodigal did, and it ended in his return to his father.

A famous Bishop once made this appeal to a wild young man: "Promise me that you will do this one thing to oblige me. Go and shut yourself up in an empty room for the whole of one day." He did so to please the Bishop. Having nothing whatever in the room to take his attention, it forced him to reflect, and in the end to repent and to reform.[2]

2. What did the prodigal reflect on?

(1) He reflected on *his present miserable condition*.—He stood there solitary in the field. His clothes were torn into rags, his

[1] T. Hancock. [2] H. G. Youard.

eyes were sunken in their sockets, his cheeks were hollow, his lips were parched and cracked; he looked the very effigy of famine itself. The swine were feeding around him: he was gnawing at the husks which the swine had tossed out of the troughs with their snouts. "And no man gave unto him."

We can hardly enter into the shudder of horror which passed through the listening group when they heard Jesus declare that the starving young Jew joined himself to a rich Gentile swine farmer, that he forced himself a willing bondsman upon the foreigner, that he stuck to him, that he would not be denied. He who began by asking his father to give him everything, now prays to his enemy to allow him anything. The proud child of Abraham receives an insult, and grasps at it thankfully. He is sent, as if he were a slave, into the alien's fields to feed swine.

¶ How admirably has Watts represented the "Prodigal Son" as an example of the larger liberty which sin offers to the deluded soul, and which ends in destitution and in the company of the swine. He is resting at the foot of a huge fig-tree whose leaves overshadow his nakedness from the scorching sun, in a woe-begone attitude, feeling to the full the wretchedness of his position, with a most expressive countenance full of sadness and remorse, bethinking himself of the bread enough in his father's house and to spare, while he perishes for lack of food, and there is no one to pity or help him. His forlorn, destitute look shows the ruin of a nature so noble that it cannot be content with its circumstances, but recalls a happier and worthier condition. The contrast between the two natures, the human and the swinish, is brought out with subtle power. The swine lying in indolent sensual enjoyment on the ground show the satisfaction of creatures that are at home in their circumstances, whose wants are bounded by their nature, and supplied in the wilderness where man finds nothing suitable for him. Man has a larger nature than any husks of the world's good things can feed—which nothing that God can give—no creature good—nothing but God Himself can satisfy. And therefore he is miserable even when worldly things are most favourable to him, until he has come to himself, and resolved that he will arise and go to his Father, and to the true home of his spirit.[1]

(2) He reflected on *his past error and folly*.—He saw what was the genesis of his whole miserable condition: he ought never

[1] Hugh Macmillan, *Life-Work of G. F. Watts*, 165.

to have left his father's home. That was the beginning of his undoing; and, if he was ever to be saved, he must get back to where he started from. "Why!" he says: "in my father's house the very servants have enough and to spare, whilst I, his son, perish with hunger." In the past he had been stinted in nothing, and now he was dying from hunger. The truth dawned upon him. He saw not only his perilous condition but the reason for it. The insane man had become sane.

¶ At St. Helena the Emperor turns upon Gourgaud with pathetic truth: "You speak of sorrow, you! And I! What sorrows have I not had! What things to reproach myself with! You at any rate have nothing to regret." And again: "Do you suppose that when I wake at night I have not bad moments—when I think of what I was, and what I am?"[1]

Why feedest thou on husks so coarse and rude?
I could not be content with angels' food.

How camest thou companion to the swine?
I loathed the courts of heaven, the choir divine.

Who bade thee crouch in hovel dark and drear?
I left a palace wide to hide me here.

Harsh tyrant's slave who made thee, once so free?
A father's rule too heavy seemed to me.

What sordid rags float round thee on the breeze?
I laid immortal robes aside for these.

An exile through the world who bade thee roam?
None, but I wearied of a happy home.

Why must thou dweller in a desert be?
A garden seemed not fair enough to me.

Why sue a beggar at the mean world's door?
To live on God's large bounty seemed so poor.

What has thy forehead so to earthward brought?
To lift it higher than the stars I thought.[2]

[1] Lord Rosebery, *Napoleon, the Last Phase*, 49.
[2] R. C. Trench, *Poems*, 234.

(3) He recalled *the privileges and the happiness of the home* on which he so lightly turned his back. The poor prodigal—homeless, friendless, starving—remembered his home, his father's loving care of him, his mother's tender schooling. He could see, as in a vision, the old house where he was born, the garden where he played as a child, the flowers that he had trained, the trees that he had climbed. He had grown tired of home; now how he longed to see it once more! In his father's house there was plenty of bread and to spare, and the loving ministry of his parents.

¶ The German poet tells us of a robber who, in his lawless stronghold beside the Rhine, remembered the days when he, a little child, could not sleep unless his mother had kissed him. Danton, one of the blood-stained leaders of the French Revolution, thought lovingly in his latter days of the little village where he was born, and visited the simple farm where he spent his childhood. Napoleon, a crushed and ruined man, could recall with a sigh the day when he received his first communion in his innocent boyhood long ago. Many a one in his hour of remorse and misery has echoed the words of Job—"Oh, that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me; when his candle shined upon my head, and when by his light I walked through darkness; as I was in the days of my youth, when the secret of God was upon my tabernacle."[1]

Does that lamp still burn in my Father's house
Which he kindled the night I went away?
I turned once beneath the cedar boughs,
And marked it gleam with a golden ray;
Did he think to light me home some day?

Hungry here with the crunching swine,
Hungry harvest have I to reap;
In a dream I count my Father's kine,
I hear the tinkling bells of his sheep,
I watch his lambs that browse and leap.

There is plenty of bread at home,
His servants have bread enough and to spare;
The purple wine-fat froths with foam,
Oil and spices make sweet the air,
While I perish hungry and bare.

[1] W. Buxton, *The Battle of Life*, 112.

Rich and blessed those servants, rather
Than I who see not my Father's face!
I will arise and go to my Father:—
"Fallen from sonship, beggared of grace,
Grant me, Father, a servant's place."[1]

II.

Repentance.

1. Repentance means a change of mind, so that we hate the evil which we once loved; we shrink from the bad company in which we delighted; we go back to the God whom we neglected; we turn from the cup of sinful pleasure as from poison. It will not do for us to remain with the swine and the filth of sin, and bewail that we are not clean. If we would be clean we must leave the dirty ways; we must arise. The prodigal made up his mind at once. He did not hesitate as to what he should do; he did not try to join himself to yet another citizen of the far country, or to seek some other sin. There was only one thing for him to do, and he did it.

¶ In illustration of the change in life and position which this meant, the story of Marie Antoinette has been told, how she took off her old robes and put on new, as she entered France to become its queen. It just meant that she had put off the Austrian princess, and put on the French queen. So it is to be with us. Our repentance must mean a new life, in the freedom of sons. It must mean amendment of heart, and character, and will: the putting off of the old man, the putting on of the new.[2]

2. The prodigal said to himself: "I will *arise*, and *go*, and *say*." What is the meaning of these three expressions? They are of the simplest kind and belong to the common vocabulary of every-day life. Yet there is contained in them a perfect description of what is required of every man in the act of repentance. Every man who "repents him truly of his former sins" must first "arise"—must then "go"—and must then "say."

[1] Christina G. Rossetti, *Poems*, 251.
[2] V. L. Johnstone, *Sonship*, 66.

(1) "I will arise." That means strictly "stand upright." For sin drags a man downwards, and the first step towards repentance from sin is to refuse to remain at the low level to which one has sunk. Get on your legs! Look up to Heaven, to the God and Father of us all! We know that, even as regards our bodies, it means something to keep them from bending and stooping towards the ground. We know that the downcast look and the drooping head are to be avoided. Only when we are in grief, or in disgrace, are these postures allowable. We see, then, that even our bodies teach us the need of uprightness. But this lesson, which even our bodies teach us, is in like manner the first lesson which the soul has to learn in the act of repentance. Repentance is, in the first instance, a looking upward, a standing upright. It consists in saying, "I will not wallow any more on the ground. I feel that there is something within me which requires to be lifted above the level to which I have hitherto descended. Why should I not look beyond my past experiences to a better and higher life in the future?"

¶ I spent a very interesting and on the whole a very encouraging time in Northampton. I preached twice—once on Sunday at the dedication of St. Crispin's, and once on Sunday at St. Sepulchre's. It certainly was a great fact to see two hundred and fifty *bona-fide* Northampton shoemakers filling nearly half the new church; and to have pointed out to me churchwardens and committee-men, zealous Churchmen and communicants, who two years ago were fierce Bradlaughites and infidels. I talked with one of these. I shall not easily forget the quiet earnestness and modesty of the man, nor the way he spoke of his conversion through hearing a sermon on the Prodigal Son. "It was that," he said, "that did it." I felt at the moment what a Divine unending power there is in that great word of Christ. How mightier than all our words and deeds! How often in the world's history has that word, "I will arise and go to my Father," moved hearts that nothing else could move?[1]

I will arise, repenting and in pain;
I will arise, and smite upon my breast
And turn to thee again;
Thou choosest best;
Lead me along the road Thou makest plain.

[1] *Life of Archbishop Magee*, ii. 204.

Lead me a little way, and carry me
A little way, and hearken to my sighs,
And store my tears with Thee,
And deign replies
To feeble prayers;—O Lord, I will arise.[1]

(2) "I will go." That means strictly, "I will go on a journey." The man must not only stand upright in his present position, he must take up a new position. Now this new position is a long way off from the position which he at present occupies, and therefore a journey is required. Indeed the chief source of his unhappiness has now come to be precisely this very fact, that though he hates his former sins, he is still living in the midst of those sins. He is there where he ought not to be—far, far away from his Father's house, a stranger in a strange land. So then all his efforts must be concentrated on a removal of himself, of his body not less than his soul, from the hateful house of bondage in which he is at present dwelling. "I will go," he says, "leave it all behind me, place myself out of its reach." And so he girds up his loins, takes with him his weapons, and starts on his journey.

¶ Mr. Spurgeon, after preaching on "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean," received the following letter:—

"I feel so happy to tell you that the Lord has pardoned a poor outcast of society. I got into your place, in a crowd, hoping nobody would see me. I had been out all night, and was miserable. While you were preaching about the leper, my whole life of sin rose up before me. I saw myself worse than the leper, cast away by everybody; there is not a sin I was not guilty of. As you went on, I looked straight away to Jesus. A gracious answer came, 'Thy sins, which are many, are forgiven.' I never heard any word of your sermon, I felt such joy to think that Jesus died even for a poor harlot. Long ere you get this letter, I trust to to be on the way to my dear home I ran away from. Do please pray for me that I may be kept by God's almighty power. I can never thank you enough for bringing me to Jesus."

"If it had not been for that sentence about going home," said Mr. Spurgeon, "I might have had some doubts concerning her conversion; but when a fallen girl goes home to her father and mother it is a sure case."[2]

[1] Christina G. Rossetti, *Poems*, 251.

[2] Mrs. Spurgeon, *Life of C. H. Spurgeon*, iv. 32.

¶ One of the saddest letters in all literature is a letter written by our own poet, David Gray. David Gray was born eight miles from Glasgow; he went to the Free Church Normal in that city. His honest father would have made a preacher of him, but God forestalled that by making him a poet. Well, nothing would satisfy David but he must go to London. He suffered much there and fell into consumption. And this is one of his last letters home:—"Torquay, Jan. 6, 1861. Dear Parents,—I am coming home—home-sick. I cannot stay from home any longer. What's the good of me being so far from home and sick and ill? O God! I wish I were home never to leave it more! Tell everybody that I am coming back—no better: worse, worse. What's about climate, about frost or snow or cold weather, when one's at home? I wish I had never left it. . . . I have no money, and I want to get home, home, home. What shall I do, O God! Father, I shall steal to you again, because I did not use you rightly. . . . Will you forgive me? Do I ask that? . . . I have come through things that I shall never tell to anybody but you, and you shall keep them secret as the grave. Get my own little room ready quick, quick; have it all tidy, and clean, and cosy, against my homecoming. I wish to die there, and nobody shall nurse me except my own dear mother, ever, ever again. O home, home, home!"[1]

(3) "I will say." Our life's journey is not to be all toil and travel; but our souls, in the course of the progress they are making, must break forth into an expression of themselves to God, must relieve themselves by an utterance of their entire repentance and of their earnest longing for forgiveness. "I will say, I will tell the Father all that I have been longing to make known to Him ever since I began to stand upright. Full, frank, free and open, shall be my confession of my past sins. Asking nothing from Him except to be forgiven, willing to take my place merely as a hired servant in His house, I will pour forth my whole soul before Him. I will cast my burden upon Him, and trust to Him to deal with me as He thinks fit. And I will choose the best words I can bring to my mind. I will select the most suitable forms of language known to me, by means of which to show my thankfulness to the Father who has so greatly loved me. 'I will say.' Let it be an apt utterance, even if but a homely one. I will not excuse myself by urging that it is enough

[1] G. H. Morrison, *Sunrise*, 10.

if I feel and think, but I will take every pains, and leave untried no effort, so that I may render up to God the heart of a true penitent who is yet not satisfied, unless, together with his heart's worship, he can offer up also prayer, praise, and thanksgiving."

¶ Professor George Milligan, in his volume on *Greek Papyri*, (p. 94), quotes a striking letter from a prodigal son to his mother written from Fayum sometime in the second century of our era. The letter which is now in the Berlin Museum runs:—

"Antonius Longus to Nilous his mother; many greetings. I continually pray for your health. Each day I direct supplication on your behalf to the Lord Serapis. I wish you to know that I had no hope that you would come up to the metropolis. On this account neither did I enter into the city. And I was ashamed to come to Karanis because I am going about in rags. I am writing to let you know that I am naked. I beseech you, mother, be reconciled to me. But I know what I have brought upon myself. Punished I have been in any case. I know that I have sinned."

The pathetic letter, which is incomplete, breaks off with these words:—

"Come thyself. . . . I have heard that . . . I beseech thee . . . I almost . . . I beseech thee . . . I will . . . not . . . do otherwise."

III.

Restoration.

1. In this wonderful picture, Jesus has given us the most attractive and most perfect image of God that came from His lips. That longing and looking for His lost one's return; the going out to meet him; the kiss of welcome and the fond embrace; the prompt, frank, and complete forgiveness; the utter silence and forgetfulness concerning the evil and shameful past, as if it had never been; the festal robes and the rejoicing guests; the infinite tenderness, delicacy, and sweetness of it all, make up an appealing and affecting portrait which chains our admiration, stirs our deepest hearts, and goes beyond all thought. We feel that there is something far more than human in this. It is the beauty of God; it is the unspeakable grace of the Divine Fatherhood; and it is the great, pitiful, forgiving heart of God that the story brings

to view, and that stands for ever prominent in our thoughts of it.

¶ A lad from the north country strayed or stole into one of our great London cathedrals. He was lonely, dejected, friendless, and ashamed. He had sown his wild oats and a good many other things—gambled, drunk, and fooled away money, health, and character. Disgraced, hungry, desperate, and broken-hearted, he crept in with the vast congregation to the sacred building. The preacher read the lesson for the day. It was this incomparable parable. He read it without comment, but with clear and impassioned elocution. The outcast drank it all in with ears and heart strained to intensity; and when it was finished, forgetting the place, people, and everything else, he cried out audibly, "Eh, but yon was a grand old man!" And the whole world of Bible-readers have said substantially the same thing when they came to this imperishable picture.[1]

2. Though the prodigal sins, yet, as the parable shows, the fatherly heart never changes. The separation between man and God, the separation between us and God, has always been on one side only—on ours. "Be ye reconciled to God." It is this unshaken certainty of the Fatherhood of God that can save man at his worst from despair. God's forgiveness is not indeed weakness, an easy overlooking of sin. To know what sin is in itself must make that thought impossible. But forgiveness is God's delight in seeing His children realize their sonship; it is God's welcome home to them.

Spake our Lord: "If one draw near
Unto God—with praise and prayer—
Half a cubit, God will go
Twenty leagues to meet him so."

He who walketh unto God,
God will run upon the road,
All the quicklier to forgive
One who learns at last to live.[2]

¶ A great preacher used to tell the story of a farmer he knew. His daughter ran away from home, once, twice, three times, and on going into the county town one day he was told that she was

[1] J. G. Greenhough, *Parables of Jesus*, 393. [2] Sir Edwin Arnold.

up before the magistrate for disorderly conduct. His landlord sat on the bench, and said: "Mr. So-and-so, we all respect you; take your daughter home." But the old man said: "She is no daughter of mine any longer. I forgave her once, I took her back twice, but when she went away the third time I gathered my people together in family worship and took my knife and cut her name out of the family Bible."

3. The Father's welcome exceeds the son's fondest dream. "Make me," said the prodigal, "as one of thy hired servants." He was a slave on his outward journey, a slave in the land of revelry and indulgence, a slave in the midst of the husks, the troughs, and the pig dealers, a slave when he came to himself and thought of his father's hired servants, a slave every step of the way home as he rehearsed his plea and story. But as he drew near to the old homestead the child-life began to flutter in his heart, and as he saw his father's look, and heard the gladness of his father's voice, and felt the warmth of his father's kiss, the son began to grow, and grew so fast that as a matter of fact he never finished his story. The son could not say what the slave had prepared and rehearsed. That is the remedy—a renewed look at God's face and a better acquaintanceship with the Father's heart. It is the surprise and sacrifice of Divine grace that will depose the servant and crown the son.

¶ When father and son have met, there is no longer any word of hired servants. Fear, shame, distrust of self, the burden of responsibility, are all swallowed up in love. One sight of the father's face, the great embrace of the beloved arm thrown around his rags, the tears that fell upon his neck—these settle all the problems which in cold blood we settle otherwise.

Love took up the harp of Life, and smote on all the chords
with might;
Smote the chord of Self, that, trembling, pass'd in music out
of sight.

Self-distrust even has passed, for love has found a natural and happy solution. No hard responsibilities to which our moral character is inadequate are thrust upon us; no unbearable lonely freedom is given us to manage rightly. The responsibilities of life in the father's house are different from those of the far country. For the father is there, and we have learned at last to love him,

and that love has become a far more commanding law than hired service can ever know.[1]

¶ There are no degrees of forgiveness. There are degrees in the holiness that follows forgiveness; but pardon must be perfect at its birth. Forgiveness restores each man to the place he had before he fell. If the prodigal had been a hired servant previous to his fall, he would have been made a hired servant again. There would have been no sting in that; it would have involved no stigma. But to make him a servant after he had been a son would have perpetuated the pain of memory. Nothing impedes my progress like remembrance of a dark yesterday. When the page is already blotted, I am apt to blot it more. I lose heart; I say, "It is already tarnished; what does it matter now?" If I am to get a fair start, it must be a bright start—a start with the ring and the robe. It will not help me that you lift me from the far country if you give me a place second to my former self. That second place is my yesterday, and I should walk by its darkness. It would dog my footsteps; it would never let me go. I should not feel that sin was unworthy of me—below me. I should always be fingering my ticket-of-leave. I should never be able to soar for the remembrance of the irons; memory would clip the wings of hope.[2]

Lord, I would rise, and run to Thee,—
Christ of God, who didst die for me;
But my feet are bound with the chains of sin,
And my heart is ashes and dust within.

Lord, I would rise, and run to Thee
If Thou'dst open mine eyes and let me see
How beautiful shines Thy deathless love
In Thy face that is bending my face above!

But sometimes come drifting the mist of tears,
And shadows of sorrow, and clouds of fears;
Till night sinks around me o'er sea and land,
And I know not whether to move or stand.

Yet I'd wait without dread till the dawn came sweet
As a dream of Thy beauty about my feet.
And I'd stretch out my hands and run to Thee
If Thou'dst open mine eyes and let me see.

[1] J. Kelman, *Ephemera Eternitatis*, 278.
[2] G. Matheson, *Leaves for Quiet Hours*, 126.

Lo, the arms of Love are opened wide.
"Child, see the wound in My broken side.
And thy weariness lies on the heart of Me!"
Lord, I will rise and run to Thee.[1]

[1] L. Maclean Watt, *In Poet's Corner*, 75.

Faithfulness in Little Things.

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Faithfulness in Little Things.

He that is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much: and he that is unrighteous in a very little is unrighteous also in much.—Luke xvi. 10.

1. There is a quality of daring about this story which at first sight perplexes many people. It is the story of a steward who cheats his master, and of debtors who are in collusion with the fraud, and of a master praising his servant even while he punishes him, as though he said: "Well, at least you are a shrewd and clever fellow." It uses, that is to say, the bad people to teach a lesson to the good, and one might fancy that it praises the bad people at the expense of the good. But this is not its intention. It simply goes its way into the midst of a group of people who are cheating and defrauding each other and says: "Even such people as these have something to teach to the children of light."

2. The essential thing in the parable is not the craft, the unscrupulous character, of the steward, but his forethought. He looked ahead, accepted the inevitable, and prepared for it. And, says our Lord, there is far more prudence, prescience, and common sense manifested by men in the pursuit of small ends than by Christian people in the service of God. And lest any man should complain of the slenderness of his equipment, the straitness of his circumstances, or the weakness of his opportunities, it is laid down as a rule that it is not quantity but ability, not abundance but the way in which we handle trifles, that decides our place and doom. Even a fragment of humanity, with a scrap of a life, should diligently use that particle, so as to employ it for the highest and best end. In God's sight many bulky things are very little, and many small things are very great; for this reason, that

He seeth the heart and the hidden springs of action there, and judges the stream by the fountain.

I.

The Little Things of Life.

1. Let us glance first of all at the little things of life; and let us begin with its *small events*. Little things constitute almost the whole of life. The great days of the year, for example, are few, and when they come they seldom bring anything great to us. And the matter of all common days is made up of little things, or ordinary and stale transactions. Scarcely once in a year does anything really remarkable befall us.

If we were to begin to make an inventory of the things we do in any single day, our muscular motions, each of which is accomplished by a separate act of will, the objects we see, the words we utter, the contrivances we frame, our thoughts, passions, gratifications, and trials, many of us would not be able to endure it with sobriety. But three hundred and sixty-five such days make up a year, and a year is a twentieth, fiftieth, or seventieth part of our life. And thus, with the exception of some few striking passages, or great and critical occasions, perhaps not more than five or six in all, our life is made up of common and, as men are wont to judge, unimportant things. But yet, at the end, we have done an amazing work, and determined an amazing result. We stand at the bar of God, and look back on a life made up of small things—but yet a life, how momentous for good or evil.

¶ Something led to our speaking of the small events which influence men's lives, and Mr. Robertson of the Foreign Office (son of Robertson of Brighton) said: "My father always maintained that the whole course of his life had been changed by the barking of a dog. Once, when he was very ill, a dog belonging to Lady Trench, who lived next door, was terribly vocal. He was very good-natured about it, and formed thereby the acquaintance of its mistress. It was the influence of Lady Trench which determined him not to make his career in the army, as some seven or eight of his ancestors had done, but to take orders."[1]

[1] Grant Duff, *Notes from a Diary*, ii. 296.

All service ranks the same with God:
If now, as formerly He trod
Paradise, His presence fills
Our earth, each only as God wills
Can work—God's puppets, best and worst,
Are we; there is no last nor first.

Say not "a small event"! Why "small"?
Costs it more pain that this, ye call
A "great event," should come to pass,
Than that? Untwine me from the mass
Of deeds which make up life, one deed
Power shall fall short in or exceed![1]

2. Consider next the *smaller duties* of life. The smaller duties of life, because of their apparent insignificance and constant recurrence, are often harder to perform than the great ones. In times of excitement, or when we have the stimulus of great circumstances and the fervour of deep emotion to stir us with a sense of responsibility, it is not so hard to feel the call to act nobly as it is in the daily routine and drudgery of our common task, there to do the least faithfully as unto the Lord. On the day of battle, with its noise of trumpets and the enthusiasm of brave men a thrill of chivalry passes, like an electric shock, through an army. Every pulse beats with the throb of heroism. Excitement for a time exalts each soldier. But how difficult is it during the dull months of weary drill, and amid the petty details of military exercises, to act upon the same high principles! It is thus in a sense easier to be faithful on great occasions than to bring lofty motives into the sphere of common duties.

¶ Although there is nothing so bad for conscience as trifling, there is nothing so good for conscience as trifles. Its certain discipline and development are related to the smallest things. Conscience, like gravitation, takes hold of atoms. Nothing is morally indifferent. Conscience must reign in manners as well as morals, in amusements as well as work. He only who is "faithful in that which is least" is dependable in all the world.[2]

¶ It is true that Rossetti was affectionate, generous and lovable, but he was not considerate in small things, and it is on

[1] R. Browning, *Pippa Passes.*
[2] M. D. Babcock, *Thoughts for Every-Day Living*, 2.

that quality more than on any other that the harmony of domestic life depends.[1]

3. And now, let us ask what is meant by faithfulness in small things. We can see that it is more essential to be steadily faithful in small things than to flash forth in some great heroic act. All honour be to them who, spurred and stimulated by some sudden excitement, and borne up by the power that great sorrows and great difficulties bring, and consoled by the thought that the grief was but for a moment, and the glory would be for ever, have done and endured the things that have written their names high on the roll of the Christian Church! All honour be to the martyrs and the apostles—the Pauls, and the Peters, and the Luthers! but no less honour to the quiet Johns, whose business was only to "tarry till I come"! All honour to those whose names are possessions to the whole Church for ever! But let there be no less honour to those whose names, forgotten on earth, are written only in the Lamb's book of life, and who, with no excitement, on no lofty pedestals, with no great crises, have gone on in Christian faithfulness, and by "patient continuance in well-doing" have sought for glory, honour, immortality, and have received eternal life! To keep ourselves clear from the world, never to break the sweet charities that bind together the circles of our homes, to walk within our houses with perfect hearts, to be honest over the pence as well as over the pounds, never to permit the little risings of momentary anger, which seem but a trifle because they pass away so quickly, to do the small duties that recur with every beat of the pendulum, and that must be done by present force and by instantly falling back upon the loftiest principle, or they cannot be done at all—these are as noble ways of glorifying Christ, and of being glorified in Him, as any to which we can ever attain.

¶ Faithfulness may be said to be the most beautiful and the most necessary characteristic in a true soul. However much we admire gifts and graces and beautiful characteristics, or incipient, or possible, or developed excellences in human character, there is one thing about which we are quite certain, and that is, that the real ground and bond of all that is truly lovely—if that loveliness is to command our permanent admiration and our

[1] A. C. Benson, *D. G. Rossetti*, 52.

complete confidence—is that characteristic of unshaken truth and firm reality which can be relied upon, which assures us that what we admire has strength in it, and will last—which we call faithfulness.[1]

II.

God's Estimate of Little Things.

1. The least things are important in God's sight. We know how observant He is of small things. He upholds the sparrow's wing, clothes the lily with His own beautifying hand, and numbers the hairs of His children. He holds the balancings of the clouds. He makes the small drops of rain. It astonishes all thought to observe the minuteness of God's government, and of the natural and common processes which He carries on from day to day. His dominions are spread out, system beyond system, system above system, filling all height and latitude, but He is never lost in the vast or magnificent. He descends to an infinite detail, and builds a little universe in the smallest things. He carries on a process of growth in every tree, and flower, and living thing; accomplishes in each an internal organization, and works the functions of an internal laboratory, too delicate all for eye or instrument to trace. He articulates the members and impels the instincts of every living mote that shines in the sunbeam. The insect which is invisible to the naked eye, when placed under the microscope is discovered to be as complete in every detail as the greatest sun. Its jointed limbs, its brilliant eye, its wing of gauze, its coat of polished mail, are all of perfect finish. If, having searched through the majestic fields embraced by the eye of the astronomer, we contract our gaze to the veriest atom of which science can take cognizance, we find the same pervading watchfulness and the same care taken in the balancing of an ephemeral on its wing as in the poising of a world. With God there is this minutest attention to details, and the least work is as faithfully executed as the greatest.

¶ One of the kings of Persia, when hunting, was desirous of eating of the venison in the field. Some of his attendants went to a neighbouring village, and took away a quantity of salt to

[1] W. J. Knox Little.

season it; but the king, suspecting how they had acted, ordered them immediately to go and pay for it. Then, turning to his attendants, he said: "This is a small matter in itself, but a great one as regards me; for a king ought ever to be just, because he is an example to his subjects; and if he swerve in trifles, they will become dissolute. If I cannot make all my people just in small things, I can at least show them that it is possible to be so."

All sights and sounds of day and year,
 All groups and forms, each leaf and gem,
Are thine, O God, nor will I fear
 To talk to Thee of them.

Too great Thy heart is to despise,
 Whose day girds centuries about;
From things which we name small, Thine eyes
 See great things looking out.[1]

2 Christ stooped to the smallest things. He could have preached a Sermon on the Mount every morning. Each night He could have stilled the sea before His astonished disciples, and shown the conscious waves lulling into peace under His feet. He could have transfigured Himself before Pilate and the astonished multitudes of the Temple. He could have made visible ascensions in the noon of every day, and revealed His form standing in the sun, like the angel of the Apocalypse. But this was not His mind. The incidents of which His work is principally made up are, humanly speaking, very humble and unpretending. The most faithful pastor in the world was never able, in any degree, to approach the Saviour in the lowliness of His manner and His attention to humble things. His teachings were in retired places, and His illustrations were drawn from ordinary affairs. If the finger of faith touched Him in the crowd, He knew the touch and distinguished also the faith. He reproved the ambitious housewifery of a humble woman. After He had healed a poor being, blind from his birth—a work transcending all but Divine power—He returned and sought him out, as the most humble Sabbath-school teacher might have done; and, when He had found him, cast out and persecuted by men, He taught him privately the highest secrets of His Messiahship. When the world around

[1] George MacDonald, *Poetical Works*, i. 283.

hung darkened in sympathy with His cross, and the earth was shaking with inward amazement, He Himself was remembering His mother, and discharging the filial cares of a good son. And when He burst the bars of death, its first and final conqueror, He folded the linen cloths and the napkin, and laid them in order apart, showing that, as in the greatest things, He had a set purpose also concerning the smallest. And thus, when perfectly scanned, the work of Christ's redemption, like the created universe, is seen to be a vast orb of glory, wrought up out of finished particles. Now a life of great and prodigious exploits would have been comparatively an easy thing for Him, but to cover Himself with beauty and glory in small things, to so fill and adorn every little human occasion as to make it Divine—this was a work of skill which no mind or hand was equal to but that which shaped the atoms of the world. Such everywhere is God. He nowhere overlooks or despises small things.

¶ A friend once saw Michael Angelo at work on one of his statues. Some time afterwards he saw him again, and said, seeing so little done, "Have you been idle since I saw you last?"

"By no means," replied the sculptor. "I have retouched this part and polished that; I have softened this feature and brought out that muscle; I have given more expression to this lip, and more energy to this limb."

"Well, well," said the friend, "all these are trifles."

"It may be so," replied Angelo; "but recollect that trifles make perfection, and that perfection is no trifle."[1]

¶ If the impression to be conveyed by his picture was of greater importance than usual, every line, and the character of every line, of the various parts was pondered over, sometimes during many years. On his return home, when the second version of the "Love and Death" upon a large scale was first brought out and put upon his easel, he saw that, owing to some subtle changes in line and tone, the figure of Death had neither the weight nor the slow movement he desired to give it. So day after day he thought and toiled, and I saw each fold of the garment deliberately reconsidered, a hair's-breadth of line or a breath of colour making the difference that a pause or an accentuated word would make in speaking. For instance, by raising the hand and outstretched arm a less judicial and severe impression was conveyed, and by

[1] F. B. Cowl, *Digging Ditches*, 59.

this slight alteration the action changed from "I shall" to the more tender "I am compelled." [1]

III.

The Reward.

1. Fidelity in small things prepares for and opens the way to a wider sphere of service. Every power strengthens by exercise. Everything that I do I can do better next time because of the previous effort. Every temptation resisted weakens the force of all other temptations of every sort. Every time that a Christian acts for the sake of Christ, that motive is made stronger in his soul. Every time that a rebellious and seducing voice, speaking in his spirit, is withstood, his ear becomes more attuned to catch the lowest whisper of his Master's commandments, and his heart becomes more joyful and ready to obey. Every act of obedience smoothes the road for all that shall come after. To get the habit of being faithful so wrought into our life that it becomes part of our second and truer self—that is a defence all but impregnable for us, when the stress of the great trials comes, or when God calls us to lofty and hard duties.

> Ah! not as citizens of this our sphere,
> But aliens militant we sojourn here,
> Invested by the hosts of Evil and of Wrong,
> Till Thou shalt come again with all Thine angel throng.
>
> As Thou hast found me ready to Thy call,
> Which stationed me to watch the outer wall,
> And, quitting joys and hopes that once were mine,
> To pace with patient steps this narrow line,
> Oh! may it be that, coming soon or late,
> Thou still shalt find Thy soldier at the gate,
> Who then may follow Thee till sight needs not to prove,
> And faith will be dissolved in knowledge of Thy love.[2]

¶ Few, if any, can suddenly rise to great things who have not been first well trained by little things. The lofty summits of

[1] M. S. Watts, *George Frederic Watts*, ii. 86.
[2] G. J. Romanes, in *Life and Letters*, 344.

great mountains are only reached by passing first the little paths which lie below. So lofty standards of faithfulness in great things are only reached by previous training in the little things of lowly duties. The servant who is faithful with your pence may be safely trusted with your pounds. The friend who is faithful in the little matters of friendship will probably not be found unfaithful to you when emergencies shall arise which shall make great demands upon the faithfulness of his friendship. Your servant and your friend have been trained for great things by their faithfulness in little things. The biographer of the late Bishop of Manchester tells us how Fraser's work in his little parish of two or three hundred people gradually trained him for the great work of one of the most important dioceses in England. He had shown himself faithful in the least things of his little parish; he was found faithful in the great things of his great diocese.[1]

¶ To a man on the eve of Ordination the Bishop wrote: "'Be faithful over a few things.' The glory and bliss of this faithfulness are so great that I dare not set them down, lest I should seem to lay claim to them."[2]

¶ There is a beautiful Rabbinical story, that, when Moses was tending Jethro's flock in Midian, a kid went astray. He sought it and found it drinking at a spring. "Thou art weary," he said, and lifted it on his shoulders and carried it home. And God said to him: "Since thou hast had pity for a man's beast, thou shalt be shepherd of Israel, My flock."[3]

2. Fidelity in small things issues in an enduring possession. We cannot take with us beyond the grave our business or the success it may have gained for us, our money or the pleasures it may have brought. But we can take the good we may have won or done. The moral qualities with which our use of Mammon may have strengthened and disciplined our character, the kindness it may have enabled us to show, the compassion it may have enabled us to realize, the self-sacrifice it may have enabled us to practise, the strength and cheer it may have enabled us to give to our fellows—these are secured for us, waiting as it were in the eternal world to speak for us, and to welcome us. It is well for us to contemplate that solitary journey which awaits

[1] H. G. Youard.
[2] G. W. E. Russell, *Edward King, Bishop of Lincoln*, 221.
[3] David Smith, *The Days of His Flesh*, 315.

us all when death has knocked at the door and summoned us forth.

"Take with you in your journey what you may carry with you, your conscience, faith, hope, patience, meekness, goodness, brotherly kindness; for such wares as these are of great price in the high and new country whither ye go. As for other things which are but this world's vanity and trash . . . ye will do best not to carry them with you. Ye found them here; leave them here."[1]

3. By means of this world God is testing character, and proving our capacity for the vaster world beyond. "He that is faithful"—Jesus sums up by saying—"faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much; and he that is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much." The real character comes out under all sorts of circumstances—sometimes quite clearly and strikingly even in the most insignificant and incidental, when no great issue is thought of, and no special effort made. God knows it of course without any such testing. But He would make it evident to the man himself, and to every witness, and He would also call it forth, and foster it where it is excellent; make it manifest and shame it out of being, where it is evil. So, in little things He proves faithfulness, and makes it grow to capacity for the greatest trust. In little things also He proves injustice, and seeks, by detection and exposure now, to brand and burn it out in time, and before it becomes ineradicable and forever ruinous.

¶ I cannot better sum up the thought given to us by this parable than by quoting the words, adapted from the ancient hymn of Cleanthes, in which a great and typical Englishman, William Stubbs, Bishop of Oxford, a man reserved in speech, almost morbid in his English dislike of emotional display, devoted to the sense of duty, reveals the secret of his humility and of his strength—

Lead me, Almighty Father, Spirit, Son,
Whither Thou wilt, I follow, no delay,
My will is Thine, and even had I none,
Grudging obedience still I will obey.
Faint-hearted, fearful, doubtful if I be,
Gladly or sadly I will follow Thee.

[1] Samuel Rutherford.

Into the land of righteousness I go,
The footsteps thither Thine and not my own,
Jesu, Thyself the way, alone I know,
Thy will be mine, for other have I none.
Unprofitable servant though I be,
Gladly or sadly let me follow Thee.[1]

[1] C. G. Lang, *The Parables of Jesus*, 190.

Ingratitude.

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Churchman's Pulpit. Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity, xii. 65 (H. Goodwin).

Ingratitude.

And Jesus answering said, Were not the ten cleansed? but where are the nine?—Luke xvii. 17.

It was when He was on His last journey towards Jerusalem on the frontier of Galilee and Samaria, that our Lord saw, on the road towards a village which is not named, ten lepers. They might not come near the gates, as being tainted with the fatal disease and lying under the ban of God. They kept together in a band, endeavouring no doubt to find in each other's company some solace for their sufferings, for their sense of humiliation and disgust, for their exclusion from the civil and religious life of their countrymen.

Misfortune makes strange associates: and of these lepers one was a Samaritan. Illness, too, will make men think of God who have never thought of Him before: and as our Lord passed along the way He attracted the attention of these poor outcasts. Conscious of their misery, they stood afar off; and yet—even if nothing came of it—they must appeal to Him. They might have heard that one of the distinctive features of His work was that "the lepers were cleansed"; they might have heard that He had commissioned His representatives not merely to heal the sick, but specifically to "cleanse the lepers." They had an indistinct idea that He was in some sense the Healer of mankind; and so, as He passed, they lifted up their voices and said: "Jesus, Master! have mercy on us." This prayer was itself an act of faith: and, as such, our Lord at once accepted and tested it. There they were, all ten, covered with leprosy, but He bade them do that which already implied that they were perfectly cleansed; they were to take a long journey, which would have been a waste of labour unless they could believe that He would make it worth their while. "Go," He said, "shew yourselves unto the priests." To go to the priests for inspection unless they were healed would only

have led to a repetition of their sentence as proved lepers; and therefore, in the miracle after His Sermon on the Mount, He first healed the leper and then sent him to undergo the prescribed inspection. Here—it must have perplexed them sorely—He does nothing but bids them go, as if already cleansed. Could they trust Him sufficiently to make the venture, to obey when obedience seemed irrational at the moment, in firm persuasion that it would be justified by the event?

Yes; they took Him at His word: they set out for Jerusalem —a distant journey, along an unwelcome road. But lo! as they went, and, as it would seem, before they had gone far, a change was already upon them. They looked each at the others, each at himself, and they saw that an Unseen Power was there, cleansing them, they knew not how, of the foul disease, and restoring to them the freshness and purity of early years. "As they went they were cleansed." It was in the act of obedience that they obtained the blessing; it was by assuming that our Lord could not fail that they found Him faithful.

They were all cleansed—all ten. But, like Naaman the Syrian returning with his blessing for the man of God, one of them thought that something was due to the author of so signal a deliverance. He left the others to pursue their onward road; they might go on to claim at the hands of the priests their restoration to the civil and religious life of Israel. He left them; he turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, and then he prostrated himself at the feet of his Deliverer, thanking Him for this act of mercy and power. And our Lord blessed him once more in another and a higher way. A greater possession than even that of freedom from leprosy was assured to the poor Samaritan in Christ's parting words, "Thy faith hath made thee whole." But ere He did this our Lord also uttered the noteworthy exclamation, "Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God save this stranger."[1]

¶ In a sermon on this text, Luther says: "This is the right worship of God, to return glorifying God with a loud voice. This is the greatest work in heaven and earth, and the only one which we may do for God; for of other works He stands in need of none,

[1] H. P. Liddon.

neither is He benefited by them." Luther is surely right; for we have nothing to give to God, because what we have is all His gift; but this we may do, we may return thanks to Him for the goodness and mercy with which He blesses us, and that this is well pleasing to Him we learn from His words in the 50th Psalm, saying: "If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof. Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the Most High."[1]

¶ I believe thanksgiving a greater mark of holiness than any other part of prayer. I mean special thanksgiving for mercies asked and received. It is a testimony to prayers being remembered, and therefore earnest prayer. It is unselfish, and more loving.[2]

The subject is Ingratitude. Let us look at—

I. Its Extent.
II. Its Causes.
III. Its Penalty.

I.

The Extent of Ingratitude.

1. Ten lepers were cleansed. Nine went on their way, with never a word of thankfulness. The averages of gratitude and ingratitude do not vary much from age to age, and the story suggests that ninety per cent. of those who receive God's benefits are more or less wanting in gratitude. Man is prone to forget his benefits and mercies. He lays more stress upon what he has not than upon what he has. It is our human tendency to take our blessings for granted and as a matter of course. Man seems to look upon all good things—pleasurable sensations, comforts, even luxuries—as his birthright, upon which he has a natural inalienable claim, giving him just ground for complaint if he does not receive them. A stroke of good fortune, an agreeable surprise, creates only a transient ripple and leaves but a dim impression! Instead of being thankful for it as a sheer gratuity, an extra dividend, the individual only finds in it a reason why he should receive more of the same kind and oftener.

[1] F. Kuegele, *Country Sermons*, iv. 547.
[2] Norman Macleod, in *Memoir*, ii. 21.

¶ If you search the world around, among all choice spices you shall scarcely meet with the frankincense of gratitude. It ought to be as common as the dew-drops that hang upon the hedges in the morning; but, alas, the world is dry of thankfulness to God! Gratitude to Christ was scarce enough in His own day. I had almost said it was ten to one that nobody would praise Him; but I must correct myself a little; it was nine to one. One day in seven is for the Lord's worship; but not one man in ten is devoted to His praise.[1]

(1) Those who frankly believe are not all ready to praise. These ten men did believe, but only one praised the Lord Jesus. Their faith was about the leprosy; and according to their faith, so was it unto them. This faith, though it concerned their leprosy only, was yet a very wonderful faith. It was remarkable that they should believe the Lord Jesus though He did not even say, "Be healed," or speak a word to them to that effect, but simply said, "Go shew yourselves unto the priests." With parched skins, and death burning its way into their hearts, they went bravely off in confidence that Jesus must mean to bless them. It was admirable faith; and yet none of the nine who thus believed ever came back to praise Christ for the mercy received.

¶ In an address Dr. Wilson once said: "There is a man who has a nickname. In the different parts of the country to which he goes he is known by the name of 'Hallelujah.' When he stops at a hotel and goes into the commercial room, the travellers say, 'Here comes Hallelujuh So-and-So.' Why? Because he is a praising Christian. I think if I had the choosing of a nickname I would choose that. Supposing that my joy were rightly grounded, I would prefer 'Hallelujah' almost to any other name that could be given to me."[2]

¶ Many of our modern Christian writers are lacking in true rapture. I took up a book of devotion by a saintly Presbyterian—the Rev. George Matheson—*Moments on the Mount*, a book of real value. There are one hundred and eight meditations in it, but there is not one that passes into rapturous praise. Again, we all love the *Christian Year* more and more the older we grow, but the sobriety of tone that it claims as its distinctive note does, I think, deprive us of the note of gratitude amounting to rapture. It is the same with Keble's *Lyra Innocentium*; wondrous beauty is there, but he does not strike all the chords at once for the great chorus of praise. It is almost true also of

[1] C. H. Spurgeon.

[2] *Life of James Hood Wilson*, 433.

Newman, except in the well-known "Angels' Song." I dare to say it is the same with Tennyson and with Wordsworth: and all these were Christian men, some of them fervently and wholeheartedly so to an extent that makes them wear the title "saintly" with absolute propriety.

I then extended my researches further back in time and at once I discovered the note I sought. They were not greater Christians than those I have mentioned, but their note has more rapture. Spenser, George Herbert, Milton, Henry Vaughan, Addison, Ken, Watts, Newton. You cannot read their poetry or hymns without feeling the thrill of rapture. I do not say it is indispensable to a most noble Christianity; yet it works miracles because it means intensity. I have reserved one name for separate mention. I have looked over four hundred and fifty hymns of Charles Wesley, and anyone who does so will allow there is rapture there, and gratitude, and praise deep and returning again and again. And in this respect Wesley has a successor in our Heber, whose name I had also kept back as one who may be called a modern, but who certainly has rapture in his music.[1]

(2) Those who diligently pray do not all praise. These ten men that were lepers all prayed. Poor and feeble as their voices had become through disease, yet they lifted them up in prayer, and united in crying: "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" They all joined in the Litany, "Lord, have mercy upon us! Christ, have mercy upon us!" But when they came to the Te Deum, magnifying and praising God, only one of them took up the note. We should have thought that all who prayed would praise, but it is not so. Cases have been where a whole ship's crew in time of storm have prayed, and yet none of that crew have sung the praise of God when the storm has become a calm. Multitudes of our fellow-citizens pray when they are sick, and near to dying; but when they grow better, their praises grow sick unto death. The angel of mercy, listening at their door, has heard no canticle of love, no song of thankfulness.

¶ It is well to notice that when we draw the closest to God it is not in the exercise of prayer we do so. We draw nearer still in praise, for praise is the eternal and supreme employment of the perfected in heaven. In praise we come to the very foundation of all truth—to that which is deepest in our nature—reverence, love, trust, the overflowing outcome of our whole hearts in

[1] Bishop Montgomery, in *The Church Family Newspaper*, 11th March 1910, p. 202.

worship, and that is the highest exercise in which our souls can ever hope to engage.[1]

¶ The greatest contribution that the Anglican Church has ever made to Christendom is the "Devotions of Bishop Andrewes," and the reason is that he has culled all that is deepest and highest in the Old Testament and in the New Testament to put into our utterances before God, mingled with a touch of his own genius. I am not aware of any crime so great, any horror in life so dreadful, that it cannot find fit expression before God in those "Devotions." Likewise there is no rapture of gratitude and praise which is not also there, nor any intercession or yearning which is not written therein. We are told that Andrewes' awful penitence is owed to one act he committed under pressure. And if so, then that same act is responsible for the notes of praise also from one who, though a sinner, trusted his God utterly. We are almost tempted (be it said with reverence and as a paradox) to thank God that he fell into one heinous sin, since he made such good use of it for all future generations. If ever the grateful leper of the miracle had a counterpart it was in the person of Bishop Andrewes in his own estimation as he lay for years at his Master's feet pouring out his gratitude.[2]

¶ A joyful and pleasant thing it is to be thankful. Unworthy before let me not be ungrateful after.[3]

(3) Those who readily obey do not always praise. When Jesus said, "Go shew yourselves unto the priests," off they went—all ten of them; not one stopped behind. Yet only one came back to behold a personal Saviour, and to praise His name. External religious exercises are easy enough, and common enough; but the internal matter, the drawing out of the heart in thankful love, how scarce a thing it is!

¶ Begin at once, humbly and simply as a little child, to glorify God in the only way in which it will ever be in your power to glorify Him or that He would value, by making your life worth as much as ever you can in the outpouring of the spirit of good-will, human fellowship, and mutual understanding, upon the struggling weary world.[4]

2. Our Lord expresses surprise at man's ingratitude. He speaks with a sort of mournful and painful wonder; and, indeed,

[1] J. M. Sloan, in *Memories of Horatius Bonar*, 89.
[2] Bishop Montgomery.
[3] Bishop Andrewes, *Preces Privatæ*, 156.
[4] R. J. Campbell, *A Rosary from the City Temple*, 17.

it must appear to us a circumstance marvellous and almost incredible; such as we could not understand and scarcely believe, were it not that it is such an exact picture of our own hearts. Notwithstanding all the deceits we put upon ourselves, we cannot but acknowledge it, although there is no truth in the world more sad and melancholy than this; in all our manifold deliverances from sickness and dangers and distresses, we may be full of faith, full of prayer, full of holy resolutions, when we feel God's chastening hand pressing hard upon us; but when it is removed, this is all gone away and forgotten; the very feeling of thankfulness is but as the morning cloud which passes away, as the morning cloud which catches a few gleams from the sun, and is radiant for a moment, or which lets fall, it may be, a few drops of tears; but, look again, and it is gone away and not found.

¶ Where else, in all our English tongue, will you find the piteous cry of wounded love which you find in King Lear? Where else will you encounter the wild storms which there break over the outraged father's soul? I remember a great critic describing the Lear which he had just witnessed, its darkness, its splendours, its rage, tears, pity. And he ended his notice with some such words as these: "And so I stepped forth out of the world of the theatre into the real world of the streets. Real? But what is real, if King Lear is not?"[1]

Blow, blow, thou winter wind,
Thou art not so unkind
As man's ingratitude;
Thy tooth is not so keen,
Because thou art not seen,
Although thy breath be rude.

Freeze, freeze, thou bitter sky,
Thou dost not bite so nigh
As benefits forgot:
Though thou the waters warp,
Thy sting is not so sharp
As friend remember'd not.[2]

¶ It is related in the memoirs of Caulaincourt, that when the minister was admitted in the early morning (after the Emperor's

[1] C. F. Aked, *The Courage of the Coward*, 157.
[2] Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, II. vii. 173.

attempt to poison himself), Napoleon's "wan and sunken eyes seemed struggling to recall the objects round about; a universe of torture was revealed in the vaguely desolate look." Napoleon is reported as saying: "God did not will it. I could not die. Why did they not let me die? It is not the loss of the throne that makes existence unendurable; my military career suffices for the glory of a single man. Do you know what is more difficult to bear than the reverses of fortune; It is the baseness, the horrible ingratitude of men. Before such acts of cowardice, before the shamelessness of their egotism, I have turned away my head in disgust and have come to regard my life with horror. . . . Death is rest. . . . Rest at last. . . . What I have suffered for twenty days no one can understand."[1]

II.

The Causes of Ingratitude.

1. One common cause of ingratitude is *thoughtlessness.* Those nine who did not come back were simply average and ordinary people in this matter: they did not think. They did not impress upon their own minds that they henceforth owed everything to Christ; that, whatever other people might do or say with regard to Christ, their course was clear. Or perhaps something of this kind happened in their case, certainly the like of it does happen. They had the feeling, of course, that they had been most wonderfully restored, that they had reason to be thankful to God, that Providence had been kind to them. But gradually Jesus slipped out of their thought, even in connexion with their cure, until, long afterwards, if any one of those nine had been asked to recall the circumstances under which he had been healed, he would have said, "Ah! it was very wonderful; we were going along the way when we all suddenly felt that we were clean. No doubt just before that we had spoken to a stranger, who told us to go to the high-priest." "And did that stranger do nothing that contributed to your recovery?" "Oh dear no! It all simply happened; no one touched us." Thus they might tell the story afterwards—as an instance of their own good fortune, or perhaps as an example of the general goodness of God working in human lives, but not as an illustration of what, because it happened to themselves, may

[1] W. M. Sloane, *Napoleon Bonaparte*, iv. 130.

happen to others who come to a standstill in the journey of their lives, and who out of some despair lift up their broken hearts to Jesus Christ.

¶ Familiarity breeds forgetfulness. If a man has a hair's-breadth escape from drowning, or comes safe out of a disastrous railway accident, he kneels down and thanks God for such a signal mercy; or if some long-desired but long-denied thing comes into his life, he will say to himself, "What a cause for thankfulness!" But the daily bread that nourishes him, the daily health that makes life a joy to him, the friendships that cheer him, the love of wife and children that fills his home with brightness and comfort, are, or become, so much a matter of course that it hardly occurs to him that they should "be received with thanksgiving." You see the same kind of spirit in the earthly home; and in this, as in so much else, the child is father of the man. If the father brings home some pretty toy to his child, he is overwhelmed with thanks and caresses; but that same child eats its daily bread and enjoys its daily blessings provided by a father's toil without a thought of gratitude. This is perfectly natural and blameless in a little child, but surely inexcusable as between a man and his Maker. Should not every mercy remind us of the overshadowing love of God, and help to keep our hearts tender and responsive to our Father in heaven?[1]

The bridegroom may forget the bride
 Was made his wedded wife yestreen;
The monarch may forget the crown
 That on his head an hour has been;
The mother may forget the child
 That smiles sae sweetly on her knee;
But I'll remember thee, Glencairn,
 And a' that thou hast done for me![2]

2. Another cause of ingratitude is found in *pride*. Only the stranger returned to give thanks. Perhaps it was partly just because he was a stranger that he was the one to return. The Jew was apt to take everything that came to him as a matter of right, and wonder that he did not get more, as being one of God's peculiar people. Any blessing vouchsafed to him was one of the "sure mercies of David." If Jesus was the Messiah, had not the Jew reason to expect an exercise of power on his behalf? The

[1] G. S. Streatfeild. [2] Burns, *Lament for James, Earl of Glencairn.*

Samaritan, doubtless, was not without his temptation to spiritual pride. He, too, claimed descent from Abraham; he had his sacred books, his temple, and his holy hill; but, as compared with the Jew, there was less of that spirit of conscious superiority which cried, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are we"; less of that temper which the Baptist rebuked when he said, "Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." There was, it may be, a deeper sense of unworthiness in the Samaritan, and therefore a deeper sense of gratitude. Humility is at the root of gratitude, and when we have learned to humble ourselves beneath the mighty hand of God, we shall have learned at least the first principle of gratitude.

¶ I must send you a word that you may know of God's dealings with us. You know how ill my Mary [Bishop Collins's wife] has been for long, and for some little time now we have known that it was either a tumour or abscess on the brain, and that there was but little hope of recovery if the latter, none, if the former, since it was evidently so deep-seated. To-day, Sir Victor Horsley operated. They find that there is a very large solid tumour, and that there is no hope at all. So we are trusting that at least she may have relief, and that God of His mercy will give her a peaceful passing. That is all that there is to tell, excepting that she is just bearing it all and using it all as the saint that she is, and that we are not unhappy, and are full of thankfulness. I ought to have nothing but praise for the rest of my life; and we are thankful to have been able to bring her safely from Germany to England; and we have had much precious time together lately and have been able to speak quite openly and get behind and above separation and things present and things to come or any other creature.[1]

3. Men are apt to be thankless, when they do not see their benefactor. When this miracle was wrought upon the lepers, the Worker was out of sight. He had walked towards the village, and they, avoiding the village, were pursuing their way towards Jerusalem. At that moment of awe and blessing they did not see Him. No shadowy form hovered about them to remind them that He was present in power to heal them. No word like the

[1] Bishop Collins, in *Life* by A. J. Mason, 160.

"I will, be thou clean," which had healed the leper at Capernaum two years before, now fell upon their ears; no hand was raised in benediction; and yet, minute by minute, the foul disease was disappearing, when or how they could not exactly tell: and at last they saw that they were healed. But the Healer Himself they did not see; as now in His Church, so then, He was out of sight, even when His action was most felt and energetic. His words still lingered on their ears, but it was not impossible, amid the distractions of a new scene, to forget their import: and thus, out of the ten men, nine did forget it.

¶ A strong man says in the pride of achievement, "Never since I was a boy have I been under obligation to any human being." Nonsense! You are under obligation to a hundred unknown, lowly workers, and under obligation, too, to the greatest of mankind. You are debtor to the policeman on his beat, the deep sea fishermen off the banks, the stoker in the furnace-room of the ocean liner, the driver on the swift express or electric car, and the man who drops the fenders between the ferry-boat and the landing-stage! Many years ago, Rudyard Kipling administered a rebuke to the swash-bucklers of Empire who, in time of disturbance, fawn upon the private soldier as though he were one of the immortal gods descended from Olympus, and then, when the war-drum has ceased for a time its feverish throbbing, treat the same man as though he were the offscouring of humanity. You remember:

Makin' mock at uniforms that guard you while you sleep
Is cheaper than them uniforms, and they're starvation cheap![1]

III.

The Penalty of Ingratitude.

Ingratitude closes the door against the deeper blessings of life. We cannot be wanting in this great duty of thankfulness without being untrue to the law of our existence—without the worst results upon ourselves. For what is thankfulness such as God demands but that which is at the bottom of all human excellence—the frank acknowledgment of truth? As prayer is a recognition of our dependence upon God amid the darkness and un-

[1] C. F. Aked, *The Courage of the Coward*, 160.

certainties of the future, so thankfulness is a recognition of our indebtedness to Him for the blessings of the past. To acknowledge truth is always moral strength; to refuse to acknowledge it is always moral weakness. Accordingly the worst excesses of heathenism are traced by St. Paul to the ingratitude of the Gentile nations for the light of nature and conscience. "When they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened."

¶ He who forgets to be thankful, may one day find himself with nothing to be thankful for.[1]

1. The grateful man received a greater blessing. "And he said unto him, Go thy way, thy faith hath made thee whole." This does not mean that this man alone was ultimately cleansed out of the ten. It was not the manner of Jesus to withdraw His gifts because they were not appreciated at their true worth, any more than it is the Father's way to take back His blessings from men who misuse them; for He "maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust," and "is kind toward the unthankful and evil." But in the mind of Jesus, physical healing was the least part of His purpose in bestowing health on people. He ever thought of their souls; and unless the bodily benefit He bestowed blossomed into some spiritual grace, He was troubled and unsatisfied. Those nine had been healed, and remained healed, but they were not "made whole"; only he could be made whole who was lifted into the circle of Divine relationship, and acknowledged God as the Giver of health and all good things.

The secular temper takes everything as it comes, without any realization of its Divine source; the spiritual temper refers everything to its heavenly origin and author. "Where does the corn come from?" "From the ground," says the materialist. "From the Father of lights," says the Christian. And there is a whole world of difference between these points of view. If we stop with Nature, which produces corn and wine and fruit, and whose laws become our willing servants when once we learn to understand and control them, we may possess continents, and

[1] Bishop Thorold, in *Life* by C. H. Simpkinson, 141.

yet our souls be starved. But he who lifts his eyes above, and sees in every fact a blessing, in every possession a gift, in every incident a Divine influence, will live a life in which all lower good is still his, but crowned with a higher good that redoubles its value and makes it a spiritual treasure beyond price.[1]

¶ I thank God for the removal of sickness; but I have been able to give thanks for sickness, for health, for light, for darkness, for the hiding of God's face.[2]

(1) *Gratitude is a self-rewarding virtue.*—Who can doubt that this man was far happier in his condition of mind, that he felt a more full and ample and inspiriting enjoyment of his cure, that he experienced more exquisite sensations than any of the nine who departed without uttering a word of thankfulness? His supreme joyfulness and exultation are proclaimed in the tones with which he utters them, in the loud voice with which he glorified God. What strength of feeling is here! Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh; he is not silent; he cannot restrain his voice: he cannot bear that his thankfulness should be felt only within his own breast; he must utter it; he must utter it aloud; all shall know how he rejoices for the mercy bestowed, all shall hear him thank God for what He has done for him. How superior his delight in God's gift, to that of the other nine who slunk away, and how much stronger! We see that he was transported, and that he was filled to overflowing with joy of heart, and that he triumphed in the sense of the Divine goodness. It was the exultation of faith; he felt there was a God in the world, and that God was good. What greater joy can be imparted to the heart of man than that which this truth, thoroughly embraced, imparts?

¶ It was in the last days of his life that Dean Stanley told me how on the occasion of the funeral of Dr. Arnold he spoke afterwards to the widow, pouring out his heart first in gratitude for having been under the great headmaster, and all it meant to him of inspiration; and then he said, "I told her that so long as I lived never should this day pass without her hearing from me in token that I could never forget the debt I owed her husband." Then he exclaimed, "And she never failed to get

[1] E. Griffith-Jones, *The Miracles of Jesus*, 273.

[2] "Rabbi" Duncan, in *Recollections* by A. Moody Stuart, 221.

that letter!" It is good to dwell on such things, for they are beautiful.[1]

(2) *Gratitude powerfully stimulates to active well-doing.*—A man will do out of gratitude much more than he will do out of fear, or from hope of reward. Thankfulness for redemption was the motive power of a life like that of St. Paul, as it has been the motive power of all the greatest and most fruitful lives that have been lived in Christendom. Christ "died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves"—this is the motto of such lives. Gratitude, like love, lives not in words, but in deed and in truth. Often those who feel most what has been done for them say least about it; but they do most. Gratitude can work; gratitude can suffer; gratitude can persevere. But one thing gratitude cannot do: it cannot bring itself to feel that it has done enough; it cannot, in this world, lie down with a sense that it has really paid off its debt to the Redeemer.

¶ A few months before the death of Robert Louis Stevenson, certain Samoan chiefs whom he had befriended while they were under imprisonment for political causes, and whose release he had been instrumental in effecting, testified their gratitude by building an important piece of road leading to Mr. Stevenson's Samoan country house, Vailima. At a corner of the road there was erected a notice, prepared by the chiefs and bearing their names, which reads:

"The Road of the Loving Heart. Remembering the great love of his highness, Tusitala, and his loving care when we were in prison and sore distressed, we have prepared him an enduring present, this road which we have dug to last for ever."[2]

¶ A well-known temperance lecturer was once being driven in a carriage to address a meeting. He noticed that the driver bent forward before the front window in a strange way, with his head as much as possible before the glass. The lecturer thought the man was ill, but he answered, "No." Then he was asked the reason of his conduct, and he replied that the window was broken, and that he was trying to keep the cold draught from the passenger. "But why," asked the lecturer, "do you do this for a stranger?" Then the driver said, "I owe all I have in the world

[1] Bishop Montgomery.

[2] J. A. Hammerton, *Stevensoniana*, 125.

to you. I was a ballad singer, drunken and disreputable, dragging a miserable wife along the streets of Edinburgh. I went to hear you, and you told me that I was a man, and might live as a man again. I went home, and I said, 'By the help of God, I'll be a man.' God bless you, sir; I would put my head anywhere if it would do you good."[1]

2. Those nine ungrateful ones did not receive more, they lost even what they had. They did not become leprous again, the gift of bodily health was not withdrawn from them, but they lost their faith and their good conscience. They were now cured, and were free to go to their homes, but they did not carry a joyous heart in their bosom like the Samaritan; they were rather pursued by the consciousness of having acted wickedly towards Him who had restored them to health. So it always is; he that gives thanks to God receives more and more, but the ungrateful loses that he has; as the Lord says, "Whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath."

¶ Only one hears the gracious words, "Thy faith hath made thee whole," or, as the Greek means, "Thy faith hath saved thee." For a man is neither "saved," nor "made whole," by being made sound in body. Whatever his "faith," no man is a whole or a saved man until faith has unsealed the fountains of wonder and thankfulness and love within him. Better that the body be consumed by the most loathsome disease, so that the soul be in health and prosper, than that the soul dead to wonder and gratitude and love should dwell in the healthiest of frames and the happiest outward conditions. For the soul has the power of weaving a body, and even many bodies, for itself, and is always, I suppose, busily weaving for itself the "spiritual body," in which it will abide when once it has "shuffled off this mortal coil." Sooner or later the body must come right if only the soul be right with God. So that these nine thankless lepers—cleansed, but not saved; healed, and yet not made whole—had far better have remained lepers, if their misery would have helped to make whole or complete men of them, if it would have helped to "save" them, by making them feel their need of God, and by drawing them nearer to the Fountain of all love and goodness.[2]

[1] H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *By Word and Deed*, 130.
[2] S. Cox, *Expositions*, iii. 398.

But one alone
Turns back that gift of God's great love to own,
His thanks and praise to tell;
Son of Samaria's race,
In him is seen a fuller, worthier grace,
Than aught in Israel.

And is it not so still?
Are not we slow to own the Mighty Will
That works to save and bless?
We, who so much receive,
The speech of joy and praise to others leave,
Whom God endowed with less.

We lose what God has given,
The prize for which our feeble faith has striven
Because we thank Him not;
Though healed the leprous taint,
Yet still the head is sick and heart is faint;
We crave we know not what.

Wilt thou full health attain,
Let thy heart utter joy's exulting strain;
To Christ who cleansed thee turn;
Then shalt thou know, at last,
A fuller bliss than all thy unblest past,
High thoughts that cleanse and burn.[1]

[1] E. H. Plumptre.

The Coming of the Kingdom.

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The Coming of the Kingdom.

And being asked by the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God cometh, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, Lo, here! or, There! for lo, the kingdom of God is within you.—Luke xvii. 20, 21.

1. There are few sayings of our Lord whose meaning has been more disputed. What did our Lord mean? Did He mean, as we at first are sure to understand Him to mean, that the Kingdom of God is to be looked for, not in the outward scene of man's life but in the heart of man himself? That is no doubt, in one sense, most true. The Kingdom of God, as St. Paul says, is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, and it is within ourselves, though not only within ourselves, that these things are found. Or, secondly, did the Lord here speak of His own presence in the world? Did He mean that the Kingdom, or reign, of God was already realized in His own Person, and in the little band which was living under His direction? That also is, no doubt, most true. In Jesus and His little company the Pharisees had already "in the midst of them" those in whom God was indeed ruling. Or, thirdly, was our Lord's meaning, as we should now say, eschatological? Did He mean that it was idle to watch for the dawn of the Kingdom of God, since that Kingdom would come suddenly, and in its noontide glory, without any gradual dawn to herald its coming? A moment before its arrival we shall detect no sign of it. And then, as the hour strikes, "Lo! the kingdom of God is in the midst" of us! Each of these meanings is possible, and each is attractive; how shall we decide between them?

The context provides us with an answer. We read the next verses and this is what we find: "And he said unto the disciples, The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it. And they shall say to you, Lo, there! Lo, here! go not away, nor follow after them; for

as the lightning, when it lighteneth out of the one part under the heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall the Son of man be in his day." Now, surely, these later verses explain the earlier. The disciples themselves, the Lord seems to say, will in the days to come raise the same question as the Pharisees have raised, and raise it with a longing desire which even the Pharisees do not know. By the disciples, indeed, the coming of the Kingdom will be bound up with the coming of the Son of Man; the fulfilment of all their loftiest hopes will rest with Him. But they, too, in their longing desire, will be tempted to "follow wandering fires," and the Lord bids them resist that temptation. When the Son of Man does come to bring the Kingdom, the lightning itself will not be plainer, or more sudden in its coming, than He. Can we doubt, then, that our Lord's words to the Pharisees had a similar meaning? They, too, are eschatological, as the words to the disciples are. They, too, warn us that the Kingdom of God will come very suddenly, and that we must ever be ready for it.

2. Let us first try to understand what the Kingdom is, and then let us interpret its coming as both present and future, that is to say, as already in a certain sense among us, and yet in another sense only to come at the end of all things. The idea of the Kingdom as "within," or its inward and spiritual nature will be reserved for another sermon.

¶ The translation of the last clause is most uncertain. In the Authorized Version it is "Behold, the kingdom of God is within you"; or, as the margin reads, "among you." The Revised Version has it: "The kingdom of God is within you," with "in the midst of you" in the margin. Dr. Muirhead, in his *Eschatology of Jesus*, thinks that our Lord expressly chose an ambiguous expression, not committing Himself to the statement that the Kingdom of God was within the Pharisees, and yet not missing the opportunity of suggesting its essential inwardness.

I.

The Kingdom.

The true conception of the Kingdom of God will not necessarily be the conception which is most easy to grasp, or the

conception which the earliest Gospel might most easily suggest to us; it will be the conception which can take its place in actual history. We know from the Old Testament what the Kingdom of God meant, and was found to be, before the Lord came. We know from the New Testament, and from our own experience, what it meant and has been found to be in the life of the Church. Our Lord's conception of it must surely have been the conception which can link the one with the other without breach of continuity. That conception may have been complex, like His own wonderful personality. Because it is complex, we may wish to simplify it by sacrificing to one element in it all the rest. But that is a temptation which we shall be bound to resist, and to resist precisely because we desire to be true to history. Neither thought nor life is simple, and we must accept them as they are.

1. What, then, did the Kingdom of God mean to Israel before our Lord came?

(1) In the Bible the Kingdom of God is in no way concerned with physical boundaries. The Kingdom of God means the rule of God, and that not just as an abstract idea, but in a concrete form, the rule of God as it takes shape in the sphere where it is actually exercised. To be ruled by God is the greatest blessing which men can enjoy; it brings with it every possible blessing. The misery of the world to-day, and every single unhappiness of our own, result simply from this, that neither we nor our circumstances are ruled by our Heavenly Father as they ought to be. Far too much they are either the sport of our own wilful impulses, or under the foolish rule of people as foolish and wilful as ourselves. And always where there has been true spiritual insight, men have known where the source of the evil lay, and longed for its removal. What was needed, they knew, was not a different kind of human rule, but the rule of God.

(2) But the best minds in Israel went further than that. They were certain that God's purpose did exactly correspond to man's need. Israel itself was in God's intention the sphere of God's rule. As Samuel expressed it, the Lord their God was their King. Just in so far as Israel frankly accepted the Divine rule and obeyed the Divine commands it found in its own experience the unspeakable blessing which they brought.

(3) Was, then, this all that was necessary? Not so, and for two reasons. In the first place, the sin of Israel was continually defeating the Divine purpose for it, and Israel itself, in consequence, continually falling under the cruel despotism of its heathen neighbours. And in the second place, Israel was not the world, while the rule of God was needed everywhere. And so we find that, while prophet and psalmist do the fullest justice to the Divine rule that already exists, while they love to dwell upon it and long for themselves and for their country to appropriate it more and more, they nevertheless look beyond the present to a far fuller establishment of the rule of God. Israel itself must be purged of its sin; it must be brought to a new and willing submission to its true King; the laws of God must be put into its mind and written upon its heart; then the oppressor will be cast down, and all be well with Israel under its Divine Judge and Law-giver and King. And, to pass to the wider hope, the Kingdom of God must come to the other nations also, and come, just as it had come to Israel, by God's personal action, by His own free and loving gift.

(4) Moreover, to those who thus hoped and believed, every manifestation of Divine judgment or mercy was a real coming in power of the Kingdom of God. This manifestation might not accomplish all that was needed; that might be man's fault, and not God's. But it was a real manifestation, so far as it went, and it pointed to a further and fuller manifestation in the time to come. If God smote Egypt or Babylon, if He brought back His people from captivity and established them in their own land, God's servants rejoiced in the present, and looked forward with the greater confidence to the future. That was the mind of the Israel to whom the Lord came. It believed in a present kingdom, and it believed in a future kingdom, and in both as in the closest connexion the one with the other.

2. Now, what is the conception of the Kingdom in the New Testament and the history of the Church of Christ? Has the thought of the Kingdom of God been there substantially different from the thought of Israel? On the contrary, it has been substantially the same. Since the coming of the Spirit, the Church

has felt itself to be far more truly the Kingdom of God than ever Israel was of old.

(1) Before our Lord's attack the powers of evil have already fallen. He "has made us a kingdom," as St. John says. God has "delivered us out of the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love." In our personal lives, if we will but respond to the grace of God, the Kingdom of God is already "within us." "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made us free from the law of sin and death." We are led by the Spirit of God—God's sons because we are so led. If that is not to enjoy the Kingdom of God here and now, what is? Yes, and not only in our individual lives do we enjoy it, but in our corporate life as well. In the Catholic Church, into which the little company of our Lord has grown, the world has already the Kingdom of God "in the midst of" it. Imperfect as the Church may be, it is in God's intention the sphere of the Divine rule, as the world outside is not. The Church is the Body of Christ, the Temple of the Holy Ghost, in God's intention a true theocracy like Israel of old.

(2) But of course we can no more rest in such thoughts as these than the best minds of Israel did. We, too, feel how, within ourselves and within the Church, human sin mars the Divine purpose, and we long for that sin to be purged away "by the Spirit of judgment and by the spirit of burning." We, too, feel ourselves only too often under the dominion of alien powers, and long for their dominion to be broken. Yet again, we, too, chafe at the present limitations of the Divine rule. We desire it for the whole world of men and for the whole world of nature. And so we too, like Israel of old, cannot rest in the Kingdom as we at present experience it. We look forward, as Israel did, to the day of the Lord, or rather to that which is our Christian translation of it, the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. He, our Lord, must come—again and again it may be—to judge all that need His judgment, and to be gracious to all that need His grace. So, remembering how He said that "henceforth" we should "see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming on the clouds of heaven," we recognize His coming just as Israel recognized the coming of God, in every overthrow of the powers of the world, in every signal mercy vouchsafed to the Church, while we look

forward, beyond all present judgments and present grace, to a final judgment, and a perfected "salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."

(3) How the final judgment and perfected salvation will come we know not at all; that the figures in which we speak of them are figures only, we know full well. But that they will come in God's good time we know full well also. So far from the belief in the present Divine Kingdom excluding the belief in the eschatological kingdom, the one belief leads on to and implies the other. It is our experience of the present kingdom, which we know, that gives all its best content to the hope of the eschatological kingdom, which we do not know, while it is the very imperfection of the present kingdom that leads us to look beyond it. Of a contrast, an opposition, between the two, the Church knows nothing, nor has ever known anything. Like Israel of old, she believes in them both, and maintains them both.[1]

¶ Jesus' Kingdom commends itself to the imagination because it is to come when God's will is done on earth as it is done in heaven—it is the Kingdom of the Beatitudes. It commends itself to the reason because it has come wherever any one is attempting God's will—it is the Kingdom of the Parables. An ideal state, it ever allures and inspires its subjects; a real state, it sustains, commands them. Had Jesus conceived His Kingdom as in the future only, He had made His disciples dreamers; had He centred it in the present only, He had made them theorists. As it is, one labours on its building with a splendid model before his eyes; one possesses it in his heart, and yet is ever entering into its fulness.[2]

The City paved with gold,
Bright with each dazzling gem!
When shall our eyes behold
The new Jerusalem?
Yet lo! e'en now in viewless might
Uprise the walls of living light!

The kingdom of the Lord!
It cometh not with show:
Nor throne, nor crown, nor sword,
Proclaim its might below.
Though dimly scanned through mists of sin,
The Lord's true kingdom is within!

[1] H. L. Goudge. [2] John Watson, *The Mind of the Master.*

The gates of pearl are there
In penitential tears:
Bright as a jewel rare
Each saintly grace appears:
We track the path saints trod of old,
And lo! the pavement is of gold!

The living waters flow
That fainting souls may drink;
The mystic fruit-trees grow
Along the river's brink:
We taste e'en now the water sweet,
And of the Tree of Life we eat.

Not homeless wanderers here
Our exile songs we sing;
Thou art our home most dear,
Thou city of our King!
Thy future bliss we cannot tell,
Content in Thee on earth we dwell.

Build, Lord, the mystic walls!
Throw wide the unseen gates!
Fill all the golden halls,
While yet Thy triumph waits!
Make glad Thy Church with light and love,
Till glorified it shines above![1]

II.

The Coming of the Kingdom.

We have seen that the coming of the Kingdom of God is both present and future; it is come, and it is coming. Before touching each manifestation separately, let us consider the attitude of our Lord. It is a most important matter for us to understand our Lord's position. The eschatological question, as it is called, is the burning question of our day, and much depends upon its proper solution.

With the mind of Israel what it was, and the mind of the Church what it has ever been, is it in the least probable that the

[1] W. Walsham How.

mind of our Lord was out of harmony both with the one and with the other, and exhibited a narrowness and one-sidedness from which both the one and the other have been free? Is it in the least probable that, while Israel and the Church have believed in a present Kingdom of God as well as in a future one, our Lord believed only in the latter and ignored the former? Why should we think so? Is it because of the witness of the Synoptic Gospels?

If we take them as they stand, they witness to no such narrowness. They represent our Lord, no doubt, as an enthusiastic believer in the grand hope of the coming reign of God. So were the best minds of Israel, and so are the best minds of the Church to-day. They represent Him as thinking far more of the future kingdom than He thought of the present one. So did the best minds of Israel, and so do the best minds of the Church to-day. But they do not represent Him as confining to the future the thought of the Kingdom of God. Israel was to Him all, and more than all, that it had been to prophet and psalmist before Him. Jerusalem was "the city of the great King." His own followers, the foundation on which His Church was to be built, were to Him even more. The keys of their society were "the keys of the kingdom of heaven." He taught that the rule of God was already being realized in His own activity; if He "by the finger of God cast out devils, then is the Kingdom of God come upon us"; and He provided for the extension of that activity in the work of the Church. He spoke of the Kingdom of God as growing like the mustard-plant, and working like leaven; and whether we explain His words as applying to the Church or to the individual or to both, it is manifestly of a present kingdom that He spoke.

Of course, it is possible, in the interests of a theory, to excise such passages from the Gospels, or to explain them away, but why should we wish to do so? Why should we insist upon interpreting our Lord's words by Jewish apocalypses, which we have no evidence that He ever read, instead of interpreting them by that Old Testament with which we know His mind was saturated? Why do we forget the destruction of Jerusalem, and the place which we know it to have occupied in His thoughts? Why, when He tells us that we shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, do we insist that He can have but one day?

Why, when He says that "wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together," do we insist that not till His final coming can there be a lifeless corpse to consume, and that the eagles of judgment must go hungry till then? Why, above all, when in His great eschatological discourse He distinguishes in successive verses between the judgment that will fall before His own generation passes away and that final judgment whose day and hour not even the Son can know, do we insist upon confusing the one with the other, and declaring our Lord to have claimed the very knowledge which He denies Himself to possess?

Take that text which seems to be regarded as the stronghold of the purely eschatological view. "Ye shall not have gone through the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come." What difficulty will that verse present to one who is familiar with the Old Testament language? None whatever. At what exact moment our Lord spoke these words we do not know. Here, as elsewhere, the first Evangelist groups together teachings given at various times. But the First Gospel, as we know, is especially the Gospel of the Jewish Christians, and it is surely with the Apostolic mission to the Jews that our Lord is here dealing. The coming of which He here speaks is His coming for judgment to Israel. What He provides for is that, before the Roman eagles swoop down upon the guilty land, Israel shall hear the message of the Gospel, and be called to repentance and salvation. And so, surely, His Apostles understood Him. The forty years' respite was apparently used by them to go through the cities of Israel, and proclaim the gospel; and only when the gospel had been proclaimed did the flood come.

Certainly it is true that the Apostles, whom our Lord had trained, expected the final consummation in their own day. So have the most earnest Christians in every age of the Church's history. But do they base that expectation of theirs upon any clear word of our Lord? Not once. On the contrary, they base it, as the Christians of other ages have done, upon their own reading of the "signs of the times." If, then, it be said that our Lord taught the near approach of His final coming, we can only reply that He did not so teach. In the foreground He saw the destruction of the Jewish theocracy; behind it, in the mists of the future, He saw the final establishment of the Kingdom of

God. He told His Apostles the date of the one, and He denied that He knew the date of the other.

¶ If the Jesus of Harnack was not the Jesus of the Church, nor, we think, the Jesus of history either, He was at any rate a noble figure, and a most helpful one. But the Jesus of Schweitzer has no message for us; he seems to us a self-deluded fanatic, and nothing more.[1]

¶ It is really well to consider how entirely our religious teaching and preaching, and our creeds, and what passes with us for "the gospel," turn on quite other matters from the fundamental matter of the primitive gospel, or good news, of our Saviour Himself. This gospel was the ideal of popular hope and longing, an immense renovation and transformation of things: *the Kingdom of God.* "Jesus came into Galilee proclaiming the good news of God and saying: The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe the good news." Jesus went about the cities and villages "proclaiming the good news of the kingdom." The multitudes followed Him, and He "took them and talked to them about the kingdom of God." He told His disciples to preach this. "Go thou, and spread the news of the kingdom of God." "Into whatever city ye enter, say to them: The kingdom of God has come nigh unto you." He told His disciples to pray for it. "Thy kingdom come!" He told them to seek and study it before all things. "Seek first God's righteousness and kingdom."

It is a contracted and insufficient conception of the gospel which takes into view only the establishment of *righteousness,* and does not also take into view the establishment of *the Kingdom.* And the establishment of the Kingdom does imply an immense renovation and transformation of our actual state of things; that is certain. This then, which is the ideal of the popular classes, of the multitude everywhere, is a legitimate ideal. And a Church of England devoted to the service and ideals of any class or classes —however distinguished, wealthy, or powerful—which are perfectly satisfied with things as they are, is not only out of sympathy with the ideal of the popular classes; it is also out of sympathy with the gospel, of which the ideal does, in the main, coincide with theirs.[2]

i. The Kingdom is come.

1. The Kingdom of God was among them. Yes, it was in Bethany yonder. It was to be found in quiet homes, scattered

[1] H. L. Goudge. [2] Matthew Arnold, *Last Essays.*

among Judæan hills, among peasants and fisherfolk, who broke their daily bread as the bread of sacrament. Christ could leave the world in the sure confidence that the light which He had kindled in so many hearts would burn on in the darkness, and that from these other hearts would catch the flame, and so the night would wear away till the great day dawned.

¶ There is no day of eternity auguster than that which now is. There is nothing in the way of consequence to be awaited that is not now enacting, no sweetness that may not now be tasted, no bitterness that is not now felt. What comes after will be but the increment of what now is, for even now we are in the eternal world.[1]

The hours bring nothing in their hands;
A silent suppliant at thy gate,
Each one for its brief lifetime stands—
Thou art its master and its fate.

One looketh on the evening skies
And saith, "To-morrow will be fair";
Another's westering gaze descries
God's angels on the golden stair.

The only heaven thou shalt behold
Is builded of thy thoughts and deeds;
Hopes are its pearls and faith its gold,
And love is all the light it needs.

That Voice that broke the world's blind dream
Of gain the stronger hand may win,
For things that are 'gainst things that seem,
Pleaded, The Kingdom is within.

There is no depth, there is no height,
But dwells within thy soul, He saith;
And there dwell time and day and night,
And life is there, and there is death.[2]

2. Why do we not see it? True, it does not come with observation, but when it is come it must make itself known. Why do we not realize its presence? Turn to the second half of His answer—viz., that to the disciples. "The days will come,

[1] Theodore T. Munger. [2] P. C. Ainsworth, *Poems and Sonnets*, 58.

when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it." Value what you have already. It is an answer which touches our own hearts very nearly. How often we overlook some present blessedness in gazing far away towards some beatitude which comes not, or is delayed! So we passed through the heaven which lay about our early years, dreaming of some coming good, conjectured to be fair because it was far off! With such earnest pains did we

Provoke
The years to bring the inevitable yoke.

The young idealize the future, the old idealize the past; and life is nearly gone before some of us learn to live in the present, and to bow in reverence at the spot whereon we stand because it, too, is holy ground. The days may come in which we may desire to see one of those heavenly days which now come and go almost unrecognized—days of worship and days of service, both in the home and in the Church.

¶ Can we doubt that the Kingdom of God is in the midst of us when we think of those noble souls still present with us, and those departed, who have interpreted to us the very charity of God? Can we doubt it when we read those touching biographies of sainted men and women which have appeared in recent years? When we read the story of the almost perfect married life of George and Josephine Butler; when we turn the pages of the inner life of that artist-saint James Smetham; when we read how the Light dawned upon George Romanes, dawned, and grew to perfect day; or when we turn to Dean Church's life, that "consummate flower of Christian culture"?

Can we question that the Kingdom of God is in the midst of us when we read of that group of friends gathered in a village chapel, a mile or so from Oxford, to hear Newman's farewell sermon, not knowing that it was to be such? When Newman mounted the pulpit there was a kind of awestruck silence. Everybody knew that something would be said which nobody would forget. And the "Parting of Friends" is perhaps the most pathetic of all the sermons of this great master of religious pathos. It is the last and most heart-broken expression of the intense distress which could not but be felt by a man of extraordinary sensitiveness when placed between what he believed to be a new call of duty on one side, and the affection of high-

minded and devoted friends on the other. We turn over the printed pages of that sermon, and feel the passion of it throbbing still, as the preacher ends his lyrical cry: "And, O, my brethren! O kind and affectionate hearts! O loving friends! Should you know any one whose lot it has been, by writing or by word of mouth, in some degree to help you thus to act; if he has ever told you what you know, has read to you your wants and feelings, and comforted you by the very reading, has made you feel that there is a higher life than this daily one, and a brighter world than that you see; or encouraged you, or sobered you, or opened a way to the inquiring, or soothed the perplexed; if what he has done has ever made you take an interest in him, and feel well inclined towards him, remember such an one in time to come, though you hear him not, and pray for him, that in all things he may know God's will, and at all times he may be ready to fulfil it." Few who were present could restrain their tears. Pusey, who was the celebrant, was quite unable to control himself. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." "The kingdom of God is in the midst of you."[1]

¶ If we turn to a little-known fact in the life of Michael Faraday, the vision of the ideal Church—the true Kingdom of God—meets us once more. Faraday was an elder in an obscure sect. He was one of a little religious band which met for worship in a London alley. "In the year 1856," says one, who was once of that company, "Faraday on his own confession was put away from us. His scientific researches had, he confessed, unsettled his simple faith as a Sandemanian. The gas-fitter, the linen-draper, the butcher—fellow-members in the little company—were shocked, but stern. We prayed for Faraday every Sunday; we asked that God would send light to his dark brain, and—I am giving you the facts—the prayers of the gas-fitter, the linen-draper, and the butcher were answered in a very marvellous way. After a separation of some months Michael Faraday, the man whom all the world delighted to honour, came back one day to the little meeting-house in Paul's-alley, and standing up before the little congregation made full confession of his error, and, with tears in his eyes, vowed that never again would he allow any conflict in his mind between science and the simple childlike faith of the Sandemanian brotherhood. Everybody wept, and a blessed peace fell upon the little meeting-house in Paul's-alley." "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning."[2]

[1] G. Littlemore. [2] *Ibid.*

3. And yet it may be said that a man must be a sturdy optimist who, knowing what the actual condition of Christendom is, can still find it quite to his mind and entirely satisfactory. Satisfactory! Actual realizations of a great ideal can never satisfy an idealist. They are satisfactory only in so far as they are signs of something better yet to be. A child's drawing may be grotesquely wrong and yet show signs of coming power—signs sufficient to awaken hope in the hearts of those who watch his progress. We must learn rightly to estimate men's "half-reasons, faint aspirings, dim struggles for truth, their poorest fallacies—all with a touch of nobleness despite their error." We must learn to acquiesce in the slow evolution of the new moral order—to understand that there are evenings and mornings in the days of the new creation, and that it takes an evening and a morning to make one of God's days.

There are only two ways of escape from the bitterness to which we are prone in view of these facts. One is to endeavour to "do good for its own sake"; to find our satisfaction in the simple sense of having done our duty. So far as it goes, this is a true refuge from the misrepresentation and ingratitude of the world, and there are men of such lofty ethical temper that it seems to suffice to keep them diligent, humble, and tireless in the way of service. Nevertheless, there is a better way, to those, at least, who superadd genuine religious faith to real ethical passion. It is to bear in mind the absolute justice and the unfailing benevolence of their heavenly Master and Lord. Nothing short of this can keep all but a select few superlatively endowed ethical souls faithful and unspoiled to the end.

¶ After so many graces, may I not sing with the Psalmist that "the Lord is good, that his mercy endureth for ever"? It seems to me that if every one were to receive such favours God would be feared by none, but loved to excess; that no one would ever commit the least wilful fault—and this through love, not fear. Yet all souls cannot be alike. It is necessary that they should differ from one another in order that each Divine Perfection may receive its special honour. To me, He has given His Infinite Mercy, and it is in this ineffable mirror that I contemplate His other attributes. Therein all appear to me radiant with Love. His Justice, even more perhaps than the rest, seems to me to be clothed with Love. What joy to think that our Lord

is just, that is to say, that He takes our weakness into account, that He knows perfectly the frailty of our nature! Of what, then, need I be afraid? Will not the God of Infinite Justice, who deigns so lovingly to pardon the sins of the Prodigal Son, be also just to me "who am always with him"?[1]

ii. The Kingdom is Coming.

Though it may be without observation now, it will in the end be the observed of all observers, the admired of all admirers, the cynosure of every eye, the one glory when every other glory shall have paled; the one name and fame which shall survive when every other shall have passed away as a noise; the one kingdom which, itself immovable, shall behold the wreck and the ruin of every kingdom besides; and then, in that kingdom of the Spirit, that kingdom of the truth, wherein goodness shall be the only measure of greatness, and each and all shall wear an outward beauty exactly corresponding to the inward beauty of the Christ in them or, alas! shall put on an outward deformity corresponding to the inner unloveliness of their hearts and lives; then, in that kingdom of the truth, all that are of the truth shall shine out as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father, for Christ, who is their life, shall have appeared, and they shall appear with Him in glory.

¶ When the Kingdom comes in its greatness, it will fulfil every religion and destroy none, clearing away the imperfect and opening up reaches of goodness not yet imagined, till it has gathered into its bosom whatsoever things are true and honest and just and pure and lovely. It standeth on the earth as the city of God with its gates open by night and by day, into which entereth nothing that defileth, but into which is brought the glory and power of the nations. It is the natural home of the good; as Zwingli, the Swiss reformer, said in his dying confession, "Not one good man, one holy spirit, one faithful soul, whom you will not then behold with God."[2]

1. There were two influential tendencies in the time of Christ —the same two that one finds everywhere. There was one class of people who believed the Kingdom of God would come only by fighting for it. They wanted a revolution. They had in them the fire of the old Maccabean days. The Zealots were of this way

[1] *Sœur Thérèse of Lisieux*, 132.
[2] John Watson, *The Mind of the Master*.

of thinking. Barabbas and the two men who were crucified with Christ were very likely men of this insurrectionist type. Judas Iscariot had the revolutionary spirit, and he was bitterly disappointed that Jesus did not turn out to be a revolutionary leader, organizing the discontent and unrest of the people into a formidable force of opposition. Jesus doubtless had the revolutionists in mind when He said: "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, Lo, here! or, There! for lo, the kingdom of God is within you."

There was another circle of men, who looked for the Kingdom of God to come, not by revolution, but by revelation. They expected some sign from heaven. They looked for a miracle. There would be some catastrophe in the natural world, and God would come in and take possession of things, and His reign would actually begin. Therefore Jesus doubtless had in mind the men who looked for a miracle, as well as the men who wanted a revolution, when He said: The kingdom of God does not come by observation, by watching for it, by identifying it with this or that strange occurrence. It is hidden in the course of things. It grows up in its own silent and unobtrusive way, because it is a part of life, it is the order of the world. It is amongst you, and within you.

In a word, Jesus did not look for the Kingdom of God to come through militant revolution, with Judas and the Zealots; nor by miraculous revelation, with the scribes and the Rabbis; but by quiet, steady, invisible evolution. The Kingdom of God was the unfolding order of the world. It was the unfolding growth of the human spirit. It was the response of the one to the other. It was seeing light in the light—seeing more light as the eyes grew stronger and the light grew clearer.

2. What is the relation of the Kingdom of God to the actual world in which we live? Is it one (1) of independence and detachment, or (2) of antagonism and contradiction, or (3) of interpenetration? This is no abstract question, but one that vitally affects our attitude towards life's practical duties and problems.

(1) It may be held that the "natural" and "spiritual" orders of existence occupy different planes of activity, between which

there is no possible point of contact. There is much in the exposition of the principles of the Kingdom as given in the Gospels that would suggest this view. Jesus Himself took no part in the political life of His day; He made no attempt to introduce social or economic reforms into the industrial world; He resolutely declined to interfere in personal disputes; and He resisted every effort made by His followers to make Him a Ruler or King. The Apostles followed Him in accepting the political and social life of the Roman Empire as it was; they counselled obedience and submission for conscience' sake to the powers that were; and while they would occasionally demand a recognition of their legal and civil status, they did so only when their opportunity of following out their chosen task of preaching the Gospel was being unlawfully interfered with by hostile authorities bent on a tyrannical suppression of the new faith.

(2) Or it may be affirmed that the "kingdom of this world" and the heavenly order revealed by Jesus Christ are in hopeless antagonism, and that the latter can come to its own only by the total suppression or conquest of the former. In favour of this hypothesis, it may be pointed out that many sayings of our Lord seem consistent with it. The antithesis which is drawn by Him between the "world" and His "kingdom" is sharp and impressive, especially in the Johannine discourses, and there again He is followed with no faltering tongue by the first Apostles, and especially by St. Paul.

(3) A deeper consideration, however, will show that both these theories must be set aside in favour of the third. Our Lord preached the gospel of the Kingdom in the world that the world might thereby be "saved"; *i.e.*, that it might be permeated and leavened, and transformed by the spiritual forces let loose into it. His purpose in coming was not revolutionary, but evolutionary; in other words, He came not to cast down, but to build up, not to destroy, but to fulfil. The theory that the Christian life is one that is to be lived apart from the secular life has always proved the parent of serious and painful abuses, leading either, on the one hand, to a separation of the Christian community from the rest of mankind, so making it impotent for good, or, on the other, to a schism in the individual life itself, which is the root of all hypocrisies. The only valid and practical theory of spiritual

progress is based on the assumption that, while the actual secular course of the world follows ideals and obeys forces that are inconsistent with the principles of the Kingdom, yet the only hope of the world is that it may be slowly but surely permeated with the ideals of the Kingdom of God, and become finally obedient to its spiritual laws.

3. When the great Lord Shaftesbury grew old, he said that he could not bear to die while there was so much misery in the world still unrelieved; and that is the spirit of the true servant. What are we doing while the chance is ours? Doubtless the insensible advance of righteousness should remind us how large are the spaces in which the Divine purpose is realized. The plan of God's Kingdom is immense. It may embrace countless worlds besides this little earth; it may include in its wonderful drama unsuspected spirits and intelligences both higher and lower than ourselves. If it takes a myriad years to rise from protoplasm to man, how many will be needed for the coronation of this King! Make your contribution, then, and pass on; add your own mite, whatever it may be, to the treasury of human good; and see that no ironical epitaph of a wasted life is written on your grave. If God's Kingdom is slow, at least it is already here; it is always coming; now you are in the midst of it, now God is at His work before you, now you are surrounded by the Divine silences and the Divine voices. The goal is far off, but one day it will be attained. The great Sower may seem to sleep, and rise, and go His way, unconscious or indifferent, while we look impatiently or in despair for the ripening corn on the wide fields of human life; but the seed has been sown; He can afford to wait; and the hour will not fail to come when at last the cry goes forth to the listening ear, "Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe."

¶ One day my tired eyes lit upon that wondrous phrase, "The Lord of the harvest." It caught fire in my heart at once. "Oh! there is a *Lord* of the harvest," I said to myself. I had been forgetting that. He is a Lord, a masterful one. He has the whole campaign mapped out, and each one's part in helping mapped out too. And I let the responsibility of the campaign lie over where it belonged. When night time came I went to bed to sleep. My pillow was this, "There is a *Lord* of the harvest." My key-note

came to be obedience to Him. That meant keen ears to hear, keen judgment to understand, keeping quiet so that the sound of His voice would always be distinctly heard. It meant trusting Him when things did not seem to go with a swing. It meant sweet sleep at night, and new strength at the day's beginning. It did not mean any less work. It did seem to mean less friction, less dust. Aye, it meant better work, for there was a swing to it, and a joyous abandon in it, and a rhythm of music with it. And the under-current of thought came to be like this: There is a *Lord* to the harvest. He is taking care of things. My part is full, faithful, intelligent obedience to Him. He is a Master, a masterful One. He is organizing a victory. And the fine tingle of victory was ever in the air.[1]

Gather the Harvest in:
The fields are white, and long ago ye heard
Ringing across the world the Master's word—
Leave not such fruitage to the lord of Sin,
Gather the Harvest in.

Gather the Harvest in:
Souls dying and yet deathless, o'er the lands,
East, West, North, South, lie ready to your hands;
Long since that other did his work begin;
Gather the Harvest in.

Gather the Harvest in:
Rise early and reap late. Is this a time
For ease? Shall he, by every curse and crime,
Out of your grasp the golden treasure win?
Gather the Harvest in.

Gather the Harvest in:
Ye know ye live not to yourselves, nor die,
Then let not this bright hour of work go by:
To all who know, and do not, there is sin:
Gather the Harvest in.

Gather the Harvest in:
Soon shall the mighty Master summon home
For feast His reapers. Think ye they shall come
Whose sickles gleam not, and whose sheaves are thin?
Gather the Harvest in.[2]

[1] S. D. Gordon, *Quiet Talks on Service*, 198.
[2] S. J. Stone, *Poems and Hymns*, 126.

The Kingdom that is Within.

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The Kingdom that is Within.

The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, Lo, here! or, There! for lo, the kingdom of God is within you.—Luke xvii. 20, 21.

1. "The kingdom of God is within you." That would indeed be a most pregnant and decisive utterance, if we could be sure that our Lord meant it so. Unfortunately we cannot take it with the unhesitating simplicity of the author of the *Imitation of Christ*, because as the words stand in the Greek they are susceptible of another rendering. The Revised Version has in the margin, "The kingdom of God is in the midst of you." As far as the grammar is concerned, either translation is equally tenable, and the choice between them turns upon considerations which are fairly well balanced. The immediate context favours "in the midst of you," for our Lord was speaking to the Pharisees who expected the Kingdom to be ushered in with signs and portents, with pomp and circumstance. That, He said, was a fundamental error. It was the very nature of the Kingdom to come in quietness and without attracting observation. Men would not be able to point the finger at it and say "Here it comes"; "for, behold, the kingdom of God is [already] amongst you." If we take it so, we recall at once the words of John the Baptist (John i. 26), "in the midst of you standeth one whom ye know not." It is true that the two words are not identical: but they seem to be indistinguishable in meaning. In both cases the Jews overlooked the really important and crucial fact because they were looking at or looking for something more conspicuous. By the singularity of his life and preaching John the Baptist had forced himself upon the attention of all the people, and even of the rulers. They discussed the question whether he could be the Expected, wholly oblivious of the fact

that the Expected had been for thirty years domiciled among them. So again they discussed the signs of the promised Kingdom, and asked our Lord's opinion about them, in total ignorance of the fact that the Kingdom was already set up in their midst. It was undoubtedly all part of the same fundamental and persistent error, and it was rebuked in almost identical words. "He is here"; "it is here; here—in the very midst of you—if you only knew it." There is no doubt that such is the common-sense interpretation of those memorable words, and as such it must always command our respectful acquiescence, if nothing more.

But there is much to be said on the other side. "The kingdom of God is within you" goes further than the other, further than the immediate occasion required; moreover it is addressed, not to the rulers, but to mankind at large. But all that is quite in keeping with our Lord's manner. When, *e.g.*, our Lord exclaimed (John iv. 48) "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will in no wise believe," He was assuredly not speaking to that simple-minded nobleman from Capernaum. Only a hopeless stupidity will go on maintaining that. He had in His mind's eye the general mass of the Galileans, who received Him because they had seen or heard of His miracles, but had no mind to accept His claims or His teachings; He saw behind them an innumerable multitude of all nations whose attitude towards the Kingdom would be equally unspiritual and unsatisfactory; and in the sorrow of His heart He spoke to them, as represented (for the moment) by the supplicant before Him. It is impossible to doubt that His words over and over again surpassed the scope and range of what was immediately present. We are justified therefore in thinking it possible, and even probable, that, in answering the question of the Pharisees, He gave utterance to a saying of the widest and most lasting significance. "The kingdom of God is within you"; *i.e.*, its most characteristic development, its most proper and necessary manifestation, is an inward one—inward to the souls of men. In other words the Kingdom of God is a state of mind and soul which is reproduced in a multitude of individuals —a state which is characterized by the action of certain spiritual powers, by the dominance of certain moral and religious principles.

¶ If you want to find the Kingdom of God, our Lord would say, you need not expect to read of its advent in the daily papers, or to hear the news in the gossip of the market-place; its progress will not be reported in Reuter's telegrams, nor will its shares be quoted on the Stock Exchange: it will not fall under the cognizance of parliaments, or convocations, or councils: whatever outward connections and developments it may have, these will not be of its essence, because that is and must be inward to the souls of men.[1]

¶ Let every man retire into himself, and see if he can find this Kingdom in his heart; for if he find it not there, in vain will he find it in all the world besides.[2]

¶ What are the signs by which our loyalty as citizens of the Kingdom of God will be proved? Not any uniform which can be laid aside when we enter our secret chamber; not any watch-word which we can learn by an easy tradition, but a character which clothes itself in deeds, a creed which is translated into a life. The citizen must, according to the measure of his powers, embody the notes of the Kingdom, and the Kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. In "righteousness, peace, joy," we can recognize "equality, liberty, fraternity," interpreted, purified, and extended. They tell us that the community and not the individual is the central thought in the life of men. They tell us that the fulfilment of duties and not the assertion of rights, is the foundation of the social structure. They tell us that the end of labour is not material well-being, but that larger, deeper, more abiding delight which comes from successfully ministering to the good of others. They tell us that over all that is transitory in the form of the Kingdom, over all the conditions which determine its growth, there rests the light, the power of an eternal presence.[3]

2. If then we take it that our Lord's meaning is best expressed by "the kingdom of God is within you," there are two things to be said about it.

(1) In the first place, it requires balancing, like everything else which concerns the Kingdom. For, however much the Kingdom of God is within us, its manifestation will and must pass out into life and action. We cannot help that. We cannot really cry "hands off" to Christ in the name of politics, for example.

[1] R. Winterbotham, *The Kingdom of Heaven*, 221.
[2] J. Hales, *Golden Remains*. [3] Bishop B. F. Westcott.

We cannot seriously maintain that the citizen or the official or the statesman should restrict his Christianity entirely to his private life because the Kingdom of God is within us. It is indeed notorious that well-meaning people allow themselves to do a thousand things in a public capacity which they would never do as private Christians; but it is certain that in this matter they are self-deceived, and will suffer a rude awakening some day. As Christians we are bound to give the most careful and scrupulous heed to a multitude of outward questions and considerations.

(2) But in the second place, we must never quit our grasp upon the fundamental principle of the inwardness of the Kingdom. We are driven to deal with the outsides of things, with tests, observances, statistics, organizations, and so on. As far as other people are concerned, we can get at the Kingdom only from outside. And so it comes to pass that for an innumerable number the outside becomes almost everything. They never get beyond it; it absorbs all their interest. What a fearful lot of arithmetic has got into the Kingdom of Heaven in our days! What counting of heads, what touting for mere numbers, what adding up of figures, of attendances, of statistics of all kinds! "Religious statistics," they are called, by a curious euphemism, since no art of human nomenclature can make statistics religious.

¶ We cannot too highly value the services which the shell renders to the nut that grows and ripens within its shelter. But if one should spend his time in gathering nut-shells, quite indifferent as to whether there was any nut inside or not, he would be exactly like some very active "religious" workers of to-day. One is indeed sometimes disposed to think that the enormous growth of religious agencies and organizations in the present age must be a bitter disappointment to the Lord of the Harvest; for there is no corresponding increase of inward religion. Increase there may be; but nothing commensurate with the immense expansion of machinery. There are indeed no outward and visible criteria of the true welfare of the Kingdom. There is a vast amount of action and reaction between the outward and visible, and the inward and invisible, but the one gives no direct clue to the other: and it is within, and out of sight, that the essential truth of the Kingdom is to be found.[1]

[1] R. Winterbotham, *The Kingdom of Heaven*, 223.

I.

Without Observation.

The first thing Christ says here about the Kingdom is that it comes without observation. Its advance is not obvious to the senses and curiosity of men; it moves onwards and diffuses itself without being perceived and commented on. And the reason for this is, that the Kingdom is in its essence not a purely political fabric, such as the materialized and unspiritual fancy of the later Jews, misled by a false patriotism, had conceived it to be, but a spiritual realm, touching this earth indeed by its contact with, and empire over, human souls, but reaching far, far away from the sphere of sense, even to the utmost confines of the world invisible. Men are not to say, "Lo, here! or, There! for lo, the kingdom of God is within" them. Its seat of power lies wholly beyond the province and capacity of eye and ear; it is set up in the hearts and consciences and wills of men; and until the most secret processes of the human soul can be displayed in sensuous forms beneath the light of day, the coming of such a Kingdom must needs be "not with observation."

¶ The word "observation" is used not in the modern active sense of observing, watching closely, but in the old sense of being observed, having attention paid to it. This is the sense in which Walton in his *Compleat Angler* uses the word: "I told you Angling is an art, either by practice or a long observation or both."[1]

1. This is true of Nature. The mightiest agencies ever produce effects which are silently accomplished. There is no noise in the morning of spring when the grass of the field and the trees of the forest clothe themselves with beauty in their robes of green. There is no noise on earth when the snow falls or when the seed fructifies that is yet to grow into all the richness of harvest, and become food for the millions that inhabit the surface of our globe. There is no noise when the sun rises in the east and wakes the world from slumber. Gently and noiselessly is the dew distilled beneath the stars, and as gently and noiselessly does it depart before the breath of the morning. The mighty power that

[1] J. Hastings, in *Dictionary of the Bible*, iii. 582.

bears along the worlds above us in their orbits through the immensity of space makes no noise as it speeds them in their rapidity of flight.

There are many who might be apt to think light of a very tame and feeble agency, because it is noiseless. An earthquake seems to be charged with mightier power. It thunders through the solid foundations of nature, and rocks a whole continent. In a moment the works of man are shattered and cities levelled with the ground. And yet, let the light of day cease, and there would be the reign of universal death. The vegetable world would be destroyed, the vital power of the whole animal world would be extinguished. The earth would be frozen in its centre, and the earthquake itself would cease. Such is light, that comes to us so noiselessly and gently that it would not wake an infant from its sleep, and yet every morning rescues a world from death.

¶ "Thy kingdom come," we are bid to ask then! But how shall it come? With power and great glory, it is written; and yet not with observation, it is also written. Strange kingdom! Yet its strangeness is renewed to us with every dawn.

When the time comes for us to wake out of the world's sleep, why should it be otherwise than out of the dreams of the night? Singing of birds, first, broken and low, as, not to dying eyes, but eyes that wake to life, "the casement slowly grows a glimmering square"; and then the gray, and then the rose of dawn; and last the light, whose going forth is to the ends of heaven.

This kingdom it is not in our power to bring; but it is, to receive. Nay, it is come already, in part; but not received, because men love chaos best; and the Night, with her daughters. That is still the only question for us, as in the old Elias days, "If ye will receive it."[1]

2. This holds good also in every region of human activity, with but few exceptions. Every great movement, great event, great institution, all in short, or well-nigh all, that has exercised a deep and lasting influence on the after-history of the world, has had small and unobserved beginnings, has grown up like the mustard seed, without observation; while loud and grand commencements, summoning as with the sound of a trumpet the whole world to behold what a mighty birth is at hand, or what a

[1] Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, v. (*Works*, vii. 459).

glorious thing has just been born—these are almost sure to come to nothing, to end in shameful discomfiture and defeat.

¶ Who has ever traced the obscure rudiments, the first foundations of that wondrous city on the banks of the Tiber, which was for so many centuries queen and mistress of the world; and which, when the sceptre of temporal sovereignty dropped from her aged hand, presently grew young again, and wielded, as with a new lease of life and of power, a spiritual dominion more wide and wonderful than ever her temporal had been? Who knows the secrets of the birth of Rome? But who does not know with how loud a promise, with how vainglorious an announcement, an older city was proposed to be built, the city and the tower whose top should reach unto heaven; what a name and a fame its builders designed beforehand for themselves, organizing, as they purposed to do, into one grand society all the tribes and families of the earth; and how, in a little while, nothing but a deformed and shapeless mass of bricks remained to tell of the city which should have been at once the symbol and the centre of their world-wide sovereignty and dominion?[1]

3. This silent coming of whatever shall prove great indeed, true in many regions of human activity, is truest of all in that highest region of all, where human and Divine must work together. "It is the glory of God to conceal a matter." If other momentous births "come not with observation," with pomp and circumstance and pride, challenging notice, noised abroad by the thousand tongues of rumour and report, least of all does the Kingdom of God come with these.

¶ I see how you are and what you feel: you want to have room to develop in, and quietness for the purpose. In this you are quite right. But you think that the requisite room has a local habitation if it could only be discovered; and that quietness also is to be found somewhere or other. Let me use the language of Jesus: "If any man shall say to you, Lo, here is Christ, or lo, there, go not after him. The kingdom of God is within you." It is most profoundly true: all development is from within, and for the most part is independent of outward circumstances.[2]

(1) Never did the Kingdom of God come among men in a manner so direct, so blessed, and yet so awful, as when He, the King of kings, the Infinite and Everlasting Being, deigned, in His

[1] R. C. Trench, *Sermons*, 300.
[2] *Life and Letters of Mandell Creighton*, i. 326.

unutterable love and condescension, to robe Himself with a human body and a human soul in the womb of a Virgin mother, and thus in human form to hold high court among the sons of men. Never did the King of heaven so come among us men as when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judæa. Compared with this stupendous event, the greatest catastrophes, the sublimest triumphs, the most critical epochs in the world's history, dwindle into insignificance; "God manifest in the flesh" was a phenomenon the like of which had never yet been seen, and it must throw into the shade every other event in the annals of mankind. And what amount of public notice did it attract? What were the thoughts and interests of the mass of men in Palestine on the day of the Nativity? The last news from Rome, the seat of empire; the sayings and doings of the able but capricious statesman who for a few years held in his hands the fate of the civilized world; the last reports from the frontier, from the Rhine, from the Danube, from the Euphrates; the state and prospects of trade in the Eastern Mediterranean; the yield of the taxes in this province or that; the misconduct of one provincial governor or of another: or matters more local than these—some phase of a long controversy between the soldiers and the civilians, between Roman officials and Jewish mobs, between this and that class of a subject population; the rivalries, the efforts, the failures, the successes, the follies, the crimes, the misfortunes of a hundred contemporaries;—of these things men were thinking when our Lord was born. The common staple of human thought and human talk, sometimes embracing the wider interests of the race, more often concentrating itself upon the pettiest details of daily, private, and domestic life, was in those days what it is in these. On that wonderful night it was so even with the villagers of Bethlehem; they could find no room for the Heavenly Visitor in the village hostelry; they little heeded the manger grotto outside, where He, the Infinite in human Form, was laid along with the ox and the ass. Truly, then the Kingdom of God came "not with observation."

(2) It was so with the early establishment of the Kingdom, its first announcement and propagation. Twelve uneducated men possessed of little property, having few friends, obscure in social position, utterly destitute of all the usual means of extending their authority, or propagating their opinions—these twelve men, fisher-

men, peasants, poor and powerless, commenced a controversy against the government, the power, the wealth, the learning, the philosophy of their own and every other country. What a conflict was this! How unequally matched the combatants! How unequal in their numbers, how unequal in their circumstances, how unequal in their weapons! But these weak, defenceless, and personally insignificant men had in them a secret which was mighty to move the world. Wheresoever they went it went likewise, strange and silent. Everywhere they had the mastery, and yet there was no cry as of them that strive. Everywhere they had the mastery, yet the kings and kingdoms of the earth did not fall before them. All these stood visibly as before, but the unclean spirit was cast out of them.

Contrast this characteristic of Christ's Kingdom with what we find elsewhere. No one would say that the religion of Muhammad made its way in the world without observation. It burst upon civilization as the war-cry of an invading host: it was dictated at the point of the scimitar to conquered populations, as the alternative to ruin or death. The history of its propagation throughout the eastern world was written in characters of blood and fire; the frontier of its triumphs was precisely determined by the successes of its warriors; and in these last centuries it has receded in a degree exactly corresponding to the progressive collapse of the barbarous forces to which it was indebted for its earlier expansion.

(3) So has been, and still is, the Kingdom of God among us—from that day, and in all the world—in this land, and at this hour. There are about us the visible structures which enshrine its presence, the outward tokens of God's service, and the loud schemings of men who, under the name of the Church, would serve themselves of the Church as a contrivance for civilizing mankind; but they are not God's Kingdom. There is, under the badge of religion, a strife and struggle for mastery among men that bear the sacred name which the saints first bore at Antioch; but God's Kingdom is not in their heady tumult: there are the visible hurryings to and fro of a worldly Jehu-like zeal for the Lord; and there are the plottings of earthly Christians—for men may plot for Christ's Church as well as against it. The same earthly and faithless temper of mind which resists God's will may

also insinuate itself into His service. Men may think, and do think, to spread His Kingdom by the stir and noise of popular excitement; but God's Kingdom, like God Himself when He communed with His prophet on the mountain-height, is not in the boisterous and fleeting forms of earthly power. As its coming and its course, so is its character. It is not in any of these; but verily it is in the midst of us; in the still small voice of the holy Catholic faith; in the voiceless teaching of Christ's holy sacraments, through which mysteries of the world unseen look out upon us; in the faithful witness of the Apostles of Christ, who, through their ghostly lineage, live among us still.

(4) Now, in what has been said surely there is a great lesson for our guidance whenever we attempt to spread Christianity either at home or abroad. We cannot hope to extend it successfully unless we proceed on the same method as was observed in planting it. It began by seizing strongly upon the soul of man, and passed on, after it had done its work there, by a natural expansion, not by a forcible imposition, into his outward life. But how many are there who are for inverting this order of things, who begin by assaulting the outward in order that they may carry the inward! How many, for example, there are who enter upon a crusade against certain worldly amusements, the sinfulness of which in themselves is at least questionable, or who advocate severe restriction upon ordinary pursuits on the Christian Sabbath, as if such outward restraints could in themselves make men spiritually-minded, or secure the hallowing of the sacred day of rest. Let such persons alter their course of proceeding. Let them begin by attacking the sentiments and convictions of the human soul. A man in whose soul the earnestness created by the thought of death and judgment has found place can never be frivolous in his recreations; questionable amusements, if they once had a hold upon him, will drop off when that new life circulates and stirs within him, as the snake casts its old slough in the spring. And a man who has really tasted the peace and pleasantness of communion with God would sooner deprive himself of natural repose than desecrate holy seasons. Plant, by God's grace, the faith and love of Christ in any man's soul, and you have then a perfect security for the innocence of his recreations and for the devout consecration of a just proportion of his time to God.

¶ Our life can have no other meaning than the fulfilment, at any moment, of what is wanted from us by the power that sent us into life and gave us in this life one sure guide—our rational consciousness. And so this power cannot want from us what is irrational and impossible—the establishment of our temporal, carnal life, the life of society or of the state. This power demands of us what alone is certain and rational and possible—our serving the Kingdom of God, that is, our co-operation in the establishment of the greatest union of everything living, which is possible only in the truth, and, therefore, the recognition of the truth revealed to us, and the profession of it, precisely what alone is always in our power. "Seek ye the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." The only meaning of man's life consists in serving the world by co-operating in the establishment of the Kingdom of God; but this service can be rendered only through the recognition of the truth, and the profession of it, by every separate individual. "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, Lo, here! or, There! for lo, the kingdom of God is within you."[1]

¶ Islam is growing to-day even faster in some lands than it did in the days of Lull. And yet in other lands, such as European Turkey, Caucasia, Syria, Palestine, and Turkestan, the number of Moslems is decreasing. In Lull's day the empire of Moslem faith and Moslem politics nearly coincided. Nowhere was there real liberty, and all the doors of access seemed barred. Now five-sixths of the Moslem world are accessible to foreigners and missionaries; but not one sixtieth has ever been occupied by missions. More than 125,000,000 Moslems are now under Christian rulers. The keys to every gateway in the Moslem world are to-day in the political grasp of Christian Powers, with the exception of Mecca and Constantinople. Think only, for example, of Gibraltar, Algiers, Cairo, Tunis, Khartum, Batoum, Aden, and Muskat, not to speak of India and the farther East. It is impossible to enforce the laws relating to renegades from Islam under the flag of the "infidel." How much more promising too is the condition of Islam to-day! The philosophical disintegration of the system began very early, but has grown more rapidly in the past century than in all the twelve that preceded. The strength of Islam is to sit still, to forbid thought, to gag reformers, to abominate progress. But the Wahabis "drew a bow at a venture" and smote their king "between the joints of the harness." Their exposure of the unorthodoxy of Turkish Mohammedanism set all the world thinking.

[1] Tolstoy, *The Kingdom of God is Within You* (*Works*, xx. 379).

Abd-ul-Wahâb meant to reform Islam by digging for the original foundations. The result was that they now must prop up the house! In India they are apologizing for Mohammed's morals and subjecting the Koran to higher criticism. In Egypt prominent Moslems advocate abolishing the veil. In Persia the Babi movement has undermined Islam everywhere. In Constantinople they are trying to put new wine into the old skins by carefully diluting the wine; the New Turkish party is making the rent of the old garment worse by its patchwork politics. In addition to all this, the Bible now speaks the languages of Islam, and is everywhere preparing the way for the conquest of the Cross. Even in the Moslem world, and in spite of all hindrances, "It is daybreak everywhere."[1]

II.

In the Heart.

1. The Kingdom of God comes "without observation" because it is not outward or material but spiritual and of the heart. The heart of man is God's domain; not the only place where He would rule, but the first and essential. Here is the seat of His empire—in the heart. God's throne must be set up and His authority recognized.

¶ What is the Kingdom of God? It is the place where the King is, where He reigns—whether in heaven or in our hearts. Wherever anyone does a kind deed, or speaks a kind word—there is the Kingdom of God. Wherever anyone gives up his own way to please another, for Jesus' sake, there is the Kingdom of God. Wherever anyone lets Jesus have His holy will, wherever anyone tries to think what Jesus would do, there is the Kingdom of God. To come into the Kingdom is just to take Jesus for our Master, to let Jesus take us and make us what He wants us to be.[2]

The heaven is here for which we wait,
 The life eternal now!—
Who is this lord of time and fate?
 Thou, brother, sister, thou.

The power, the kingdom, is thine own:
 Arise, O royal heart!
Press onward past the doubting-zone
 And prove the God thou art!

[1] S. M. Zwemer, *Raymund Lull*, 151. [2] R. W. Barbour, *Thoughts*, 87.

2. Hence at the outset certain fundamental truths about this Kingdom are brought home to us which it is all-important for us not to lose sight of.

(1) If the Kingdom of God begins within the man, then this Kingdom is not merely a visible organization. It is that; it must be, if it is to fulfil the end for which God has founded it; but it is more than that. For if it were all organization, and yet had no organic life, a body made in perfect proportion, but no vitality, it would be only a beautiful piece of machinery but without any inherent force.

(2) The Kingdom of God does not consist merely in numbers, nor is it measured only by size. In our day, especially, there is a tendency among men, like David numbering the people, to place reliance on statistics and to find in figures arguments for or against the progress of the Kingdom of God among men. And even earnest Christians are apt to forget, as they speak of or pray for the growth of this Kingdom, that there can be true growth only where there is inner life and vitality.

(3) The evidence of the Kingdom of God is not merely outward profession. True, the form of godliness is all-important. Yet, if there be no living spirit within, the form is dead and useless. No, the first requirement of the Kingdom is that it must be a personal thing. God begins His reign by claiming sovereignty over the inner being of each. He must reign within the man. We can understand why this must be so when we call to mind what the heart of the man is. It is the citadel of the man's being; it is the centre of existence in spiritual as in physical life. "Keep thy heart above all that thou guardest; for out of it are the issues of life."

¶ If you do not wish for His kingdom, don't pray for it. But if you do, you must do more than pray for it; you must work for it. And, to work for it, you must know what it is; we have all prayed for it many a day without thinking. Observe, it is a kingdom that is to come to us; we are not to go to it. Also, it is not to be a kingdom of the dead, but of the living. Also, it is not to come all at once, but quietly; nobody knows how. "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation." Also, it is not to come outside of us, but in our heart: "the kingdom of God is within us." And, being within us, it is not a thing to be seen, but to be felt; and though it brings all substance of good with it, it does not

consist in that: "the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost"—joy, that is to say, in the holy, healthful, and helpful Spirit. Now, if we want to work for this kingdom, and to bring it, and enter into it, there's one curious condition to be first accepted. You must enter it as children, or not at all: "Whosoever will not receive it as a little child shall not enter therein." And again, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven."[1]

O Thou, that in our bosom's shrine
Dost dwell, unknown because divine!
I thought to speak, I thought to say,
"The light is here," "behold the way,"
"The voice was thus" and "thus the word,"
And "thus I saw," and "that I heard,"—
But from the lips that half essayed
The imperfect utterance fell unmade.

Unseen, secure in that high shrine
Acknowledged present and divine,
I will not ask some upper air,
Some future day, to place Thee there;
Nor say, nor yet deny, such men
And women saw Thee thus and then:
Thy name was such, and there or here
To him or her Thou didst appear.

Do only Thou in that dim shrine,
Unknown or known, remain, divine;
There, or if not, at least in eyes
That scan the fact that round them lies,
The hand to sway, the judgment guide,
In sight and sense Thyself divide:
Be Thou but there,—in soul and heart,
I will not ask to feel Thou art.[2]

3. How reasonable, then, is the claim that God makes when He appeals to a man to give Him his heart.

(1) It is reasonable because this King is the God of Love, who is not satisfied without love on the part of those over whom He reigns. He is a King who loves and would be loved. "Son," He says, "give me thy heart."

[1] Ruskin, *The Crown of Wild Olive*, § 46 (*Works*, xviii. 427).
[2] A. H. Clough, *Poems*, 69.

(2) It is reasonable because the gospel of His Kingdom is a gospel of love, "God so loved the world." This is the starting point of the Royal proclamation. Its subjects are drawn not by fear but by love; "The love of Christ constraineth us."

(3) It is reasonable because service in this Kingdom is a service of love. It not only has its source in a sense of duty or obedience; it is a willing, grateful service. There are no slaves in this Kingdom, only freed men. Love is the starting point of all Christian devotion and worship; "We love him because he first loved us," and the cry of each emancipated subject must always be, "Forgiven greatly, how I greatly love." Love is the measure of every act, prayer, worship, work; "If ye love me, keep my commandments."

(4) It is reasonable because it recognizes a correspondence between God's rule and the constitution of man as he has been made by God. The heart of man is always seeking an object worthy of its love; always hungry, it craves for this food; always thirsty, this is the only water which will quench its thirst. And God alone can satisfy the desire He Himself has implanted in man.

(5) Once more, it is reasonable because the heart holds the supremacy within the man. All else follows the lead of the human heart—conscience, will, reason, character—and if the heart goes wrong, all go astray. He who gives his heart gives his best, and grudges nothing, as surely as the stream takes its rise in and depends upon its source. When the heart is given to God, all is given. Other loves take their rightful place within the man. Lawful loves are raised, hallowed, lit up, regulated, and adjusted. Unlawful loves depart, cast out of the Kingdom by the allegiance of the heart to the rightful King.

¶ Beware of the damnable doctrine that it is easy to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. It is to be obtained only by the sacrifice of all that stands in the way, and it is to be observed that in this, as in other things, men will take the first, the second, the third—nay, even the ninety-ninth step, but the hundreth and last they will not take.[1]

Oh, glorious truth and holy,
Of Christ enthroned within;
A kingdom for Him solely,
That once was dark with sin.

[1] Mark Rutherford.

My heart in full surrender,
 With every pulse and thought
I've opened to the Monarch
 Whose love the right has bought.

My Saviour reigning in me
 My will no longer mine:
A sanctuary kingdom—
 Amazing grace Divine!
The will of my Redeemer
 Controlling every power,
His purpose working in me
 And through me hour by hour.

The glory of Thy presence
 For evermore I crave,
From ever looking backward
 My pardoned soul to save;
A kingdom and a temple—
 Let every idol fall!—
My life Thy full possession,
 And Christ my All in all![1]

4. Last of all, if the Kingdom of God is within, it is not constrained by anything outward or material, however close that thing may come or however hard it may press its claim. Take two such urgent things.

(1) *Inheritance.*—Our essential self sympathizes with the right and pure, but our inherited nature is infected and treacherous. With the dawning of consciousness we discover in ourselves the impulses of evil derived from our ancestry. We are vain and ambitious, the victims of ungovernable temper; we are selfish and self-willed, tormented by fleshly appetites and passions. The physical and mental bias to lawlessness painfully asserts itself. The entail of evil is often simply awful, and in all of us it is deeply disquieting and humiliating. What view ought we, then, to take of these constitutional defects? Ought we tamely to permit our abnormal weaknesses and predispositions to rule and destroy us?

Let us realize distinctly and vividly what our true nature is.

[1] Alfred S. Dyer.

Our deepest nature is not animal or fiendish, but Divine; it therefore brings with it the obligation to high conduct, and competence for such conduct. "Being then the offspring of God, we ought not. . . ." What negatives arise out of that relationship! The offspring of God ought not to change the glory of the incorruptible One into the likeness of an image of corruptible man, and of beasts and creeping things. Blind passion, wilfulness, inordinate desire, dishonouring of the body, and degradation of the mind, utterly misbecome creatures made in the image of the Divine spirituality, infinity, and immortality. "Being then the offspring of God, we ought. . . ." What positives are implied in that relationship! The offspring of the wise, righteous, loving God, of Him who is light and in whom there is no darkness at all, ought only to be great and pure. Instead of levelling down to the beasts which perish, we ought diligently and joyously to level ourselves up to the Holiest in the height. "Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." "To the end that ye should walk worthily of God, who calleth you into his own kingdom and glory." "Children of God without blemish." "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God: and such we are." "Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be." These are the royal thoughts we ought to ponder, such the pride of long descent which ought to ennoble us and to constrain to the Christ-like life. It may be true that we were preceded by men and women of infirmity; that, however, need not dishearten us. Some in the line of Joseph were far from being perfect; but the righteous God is at one end of the pedigree, and a just man at the other; because the first link is gold, the last link may be gold also, however equivocal some of the intermediate links may be.

Heredity, in the deeper meaning, is not destructive but constructive. It works for the conservation and transmission of what is favourable to an organism. It makes for health, life, perpetuation; not for disease, disorder and destruction. It tends to neutralize and eliminate the unhealthy elements which have invaded the system. But, without being in the least instructed or definite in his thinking, the average man reckons the law of inheritance as being entirely against him, and he freely imputes

his faults to its working. This popular conception of heredity is practically most mischievous, and wholly false. The degrading notion has taken possession of us that we are dominated by the "dead hand," and by it coerced to dark ways and deeds, with which we have no sympathy. Let us utterly renounce this superstition.

¶ I believe more deeply to-day than ever that the man endowed with grace can triumph over every infirmity, and bias, and lust of our animal self. There is not a bitter man who can not go out sweet. There is not a mean man but may become magnanimous. There is not a man who has yielded to passion who may not become sober and rational. There is not a man, however subject to the flesh and the world, who may not go out and walk with raiment whiter than any bleaching on earth can make it; and I assure you that in those very moments when you have not been master of yourself, if when you have ever fallen a victim to your impulses and passions and temptations, you seek but the hand of Christ, you shall go forth in this great city and "the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet." [1]

¶ With all our belief in **Heredity**, the transmission from generation to generation of characteristic traits, virtues, vices, habits, tendencies, etc., we must not ignore the factor of freewill, which cannot but modify and restrict the fact and limitations of Heredity. I am always reminded, when I hear the remark alluded to made, of quaint Fuller, in his *Good Thoughts for Bad Times*. "Lord! I find the genealogy of my Saviour strangely chequered. Roboam begat Abia—*i.e.*, a bad father begat a bad son. Abia begat Asa, a good father and a good son. Asa begat Jehoshaphat, a good father and a bad son. Jehoshaphat begat Josiah, a good father and a good son. I see, Lord, from hence that my father's piety cannot be entailed: that is bad news for me. But I see also that actual impiety is not always hereditary: that is good news for my son." [2]

(2) *Environment.*—When some of us were young the "environment" was not discovered. We used to call it circumstance, but enough years of progress are registered in the change of the name. And every schoolboy to-day loves to talk about the environment, and for some of us the environment proves most useful. What splendid people we should be if it were not for

[1] W. L. Watkinson. [2] Dean Pigou, *Odds and Ends*, 67.

that unfriendly environment! It is fine, is it not, to think about it? How reasonable, how noble, how pure we should be if we had only been lucky enough to drop upon a nice sphere; but it is the environment that plays us false. What does it mean? Would it mean that if there were no drink we would all be sober? and if there were no money there would be no speculation? and if people did not provoke us we should be all sweet-tempered? It is the environment, and we have been unhappy enough to drop upon a miserable surrounding; and some of our writers teach us that when we get a better surrounding in another world we shall all be right.

¶ Do not we grant too much in this perpetual talk of environment? There is a great deal about us that sets environment at a defiance. To look at it physically one would think that we have no option but to succumb to an ugly environment. Is it so, physically? I noticed the other day that in London seven tons of poisonous elements are discharged into the atmosphere every week. Seven tons of poisonous material distributed over the metropolis every week! Why, when you come to think about it, if we had any sense of scientific propriety we ought all to expire, but we do not. Oh, no! the air is there. The environment no one will deny. But we have some of the finest birds in the world in London, and some one has made a collection of butterflies, every one of them a magnificent creature, caught in the metropolis. In our parks are charming blooms, and something like six or seven millions of people manage to live, some of them to the delicate age of seventy years.

How men resist the environment intellectually! Look to the masters and you will see how little they care about the environment; how little they are in need of it. Look at a man like Shakespeare, with little or no education; what did that matter? There was something within him that dispensed with circumstance. He swept into the front rank and remained there, when the marching days were done. Look at a man like Handel, with no general education, scarcely any musical education, stepping out and blowing his golden trumpet, and the world is charmed and will be until the years are ended. Look at a man like Turner, his father a poor barber; the fellow was born in a London slum, never had a day's education in his life; what about that? He walked up between all his canvases covered with prismatic splendour, and if you were in London you would see a crowd about his pictures. They have been there all the time ever since I have known of the

place, and if you were to come back in five hundred years you would find a crowd still there.

If a man can triumph over circumstances, physically and intellectually, I rejoice to think he can triumph over them gloriously in morals and in things of character and of conduct. Your scientists say that the conditions of things must be right or the thing can not survive; if you have a rose it must have the sun; if you have a willow it must have the water-course; if you have a fern it must have a damp place. You can not change anything unless in a corresponding change of conditions. Now, I dare say that is perfectly right, but I can show you some wonderful variations from that in another sphere. I can show you lovely flowers in cellars, I can show you honeysuckle climbing icicles, I can show you roses in December snows, I can find you a lily in a cesspool; or, if you like to drop the imagery, I can find you the noblest men and the purest women in conditions that seem utterly to defy the presence of nobleness and purity; you find the most spiritual of men in Babylon; you find men with white souls in Sodom. The grace of my Master can make us to triumph over any environment and to walk in blamelessness and honour. I tell you I have seen with my own eyes a snowdrop thrust itself through three inches of macadam. The delicate stem, frail beyond language, thrust itself through three inches of macadam. It did not believe in environment. The power of God was in its root, and it thrust itself through until it saw the blue of the sky and received the kiss of the sun; and I tell you it can be with us in the same fashion. If the power of God in a root can lift a delicate flower into the sun, the power of Christ in a human heart can make us triumph over the most uncongenial surroundings.[1]

¶ The paradox, "Verum est quia impossible," which Tertullian uttered concerning doctrine, it is time for us boldly to apply to action, saying, "It is practicable because it is impossible"; for, under the dispensation of the Spirit, our ability is no longer the measure of our responsibility. "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God," and therefore possible for us who have been united to God through faith. Since the Holy Ghost has been given, it is not sufficient for the servant to say to his Master, "I am doing as well as I can," for now he is bound to do better than he can. Should a New York merchant summon his commercial agent in Boston to come to him as quickly as possible, would he be satisfied if that agent were to arrive at the end of a week, footsore and weary from walking the entire distance, with the excuse, "I came as quickly as I could"? With

[1] W. L. Watkinson.

swift steamer or lightning express at his disposal would he not be bound to come more quickly than he could? And so, with the power of Christ as our resource, and His riches in glory as our endowment, we are called upon to undertake what of ourselves we have neither the strength nor the funds to accomplish.[1]

[1] *A. J. Gordon: A Biography*, 252.

Cur Deus Homo

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Cur Deus Homo.

For the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost.—Luke xix. 10.

I.

The Lost.

1. We find in our text Christ's estimate of the condition of humanity. It is something that is lost. No doubt our spiritual condition may be put in various ways. We are guilty creatures: we are depraved creatures: we are condemned creatures: in all these fashions, and more, it may be possible truly and justly to describe our spiritual state, and express those things about us which make us so greatly in need of a part in Christ's great salvation. But probably there is no single word which could be employed that would give so complete and comprehensive a description of man as he is by nature, as to say that he is lost. All error from the right way, all distance from our Heavenly Father's house, all destitution, and danger, and impossibility of return, and imminence of final ruin, are conveyed in that one word, *lost*! Trace that word's meaning out into its various shades and ramifications, and you will find that it implies, as no other can, all that we are, all that makes our need of the Saviour—His sacrifice, His Spirit, His intercession.

2. We are lost, as the wayfarer is lost, because we have gone away from our Father's house, and we are wandering in the wilderness—in a wilderness where there is no supply for our soul's greatest needs, where we are surrounded by perils, and whence we can of ourselves find no way to return. We are lost, as the great ship is lost, for we have made shipwreck of our best

interests, and we drive, without a helm, over the trackless sea of life; and, away from Jesus, we know no haven for which to steer. We are lost like the guilty child that by reckless sin has broken his father's heart; for, evil by nature, and worse by daily temptation and transgression, we are, left to ourselves, lost to holiness, to happiness, to heaven, to God. We have lost our birthright, lost our Father, lost our home, lost our way, lost our hope, our time, our souls. And what loss there is in our unimproved and unsanctified powers and faculties! How these souls are lost, in the sense that so little is made of what was meant for so much; lost as the untilled field is lost; as the flower which no man sees is lost; as the house built and then left empty is lost; as the ship which rots in harbour is lost. Are not these souls made for God's glory: ought not every power about them to conduce to that? What glory ought we to have rendered to God; what good to man: what knowledge and happiness to ourselves? And, if a soul's whole powers and energies are given to the mere supply of wants that end upon a present life and world,—to the mere earning of the daily bread,—is not that soul a noble thing lost, a noble machinery whose power is wasted and flung away? In all these senses and more, the Saviour's description of us is a sound and just one.

3. But now, as we cannot be worse than lost, so our being lost, so far from shutting us out from the Saviour, forms a kind of strange door of entrance into the whole riches of His salvation,—a kind of strange qualification for the Lord, who declares here that they whom He came into the world to seek and to save were only the "lost."

¶ My old friend, Dr. Duncan, used to say, "For myself, I cannot always come to Christ direct, but I can always come by *sin*. Sin is the handle by which I get to Christ. I take a verse in which God has put Christ and sin together. I cannot always put my finger upon Christ, and say, 'Christ belongs to me.' But I can put my finger upon sin, and say, 'Sin belongs to me.' I take that word, for instance, 'The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost.' Yes, lost—I'm lost. I put my finger upon that word, and say, 'I'm the lost one; I'm lost'; and I cry out, 'What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.'"[1]

[1] C. J. Brown, *The Word of Life*, 236.

II.

Christ Came to Seek and to Save the Lost.

1. Christ came to seek and to save the lost. This was the greatest mission ever recorded, and this the greatest missionary that ever came to the world. Men have gone forth on different missions. Alexander went forth to conquer the world; Cæsar went forth to subdue his enemies; Plato and Socrates went forth in search of knowledge; Columbus went forth to discover the new world; Stanley went forth to explore Africa. Warriors have gone forth to rout armies, and their march has been tracked with blood, misery, and death. Travellers have gone forth to explore distant regions, to see the wonders of nature and view the monuments of art. Philanthropists have gone forth on errands of mercy, but our blessed Saviour went forth from heaven and came into the world to submit to shame, to endure scourgings and to suffer death, for a race of guilty men, that He might be able to save them from their lost condition.

¶ While he stayed in Shansi his thoughts dwelt much on the condition of the very poor, and on some permanent work in their behalf. "The matter which weighs on me most heavily," he writes, "is the question of what to do for the lost of Chinese society. These people are the very class Jesus would seek out to save, though I am not sure that the publicans and sinners were quite so low in the social scale as the 'lost' I speak of. The people I refer to are simply the scum of Chinese society, chiefly opium-smokers and gamblers. . . . I have sometimes thought I might or ought to give my whole time to do something for these lost."[1]

2. Christ is a divine-human Saviour. He is one that partakes both of the nature of God and of the nature of man. He comes into the world as the Mediator between God and man, and how fitly qualified He is for this part of His work in redemption. The knowledge which He possesses of the two parties to be reconciled is not merely abstract and theoretical; it is personal and experimental, for He is God. He knows God by experience, for He is God; He knows man by experience, for He is man. As God, He knows what is required and what is to be done to save

[1] J. E. Hellier, *Life of David Hill*, 140.

the lost; as man, He knows how to apply this salvation to the hearts of men. As God, He requires an infinite sacrifice to justify the ungodly; as the God-man, He becomes the Substitute of the sinner and offers up Himself as this perfect sacrifice. Christ, as a Divine Person, possesses all the attributes and perfections of the Godhead. "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead." He is limitless in the extent of His power and wisdom, and in the sweep of His duration. He is without beginning of years or end of days. He is infinite, eternal and unchangeable in all the Divine attributes. But Christ was human as well as Divine. He was a man. In the text He calls Himself the Son of Man. This seems to have been His favourite appellation of Himself. He was Divine, the Son of God, equal with the Father; and at the same time, He was human; and He wanted to impress this truth upon the hearts and lives of the people. So He called Himself the Son of Man.

¶ Malan read some portions of the First Epistle of John—and proceeded to pray. There was something in his foreign accent and silvery voice most winning, as he rose from a few calm little sentences into glowing utterance. In spite of occasional difficulty in finding the precise words he wanted, it was like clear water sparkling in the sun. One expression—which came out in the midst of a strain of holy yet reverential familiarity of talk with Heaven, as if the thin veil could be seen through—I can never forget: "Lord Jesus, everlasting Son of the Father, come near to us as the Son of Man, and lay Thy warm fleshy hand upon us, that we may feel it."[1]

3. He comes to seek the lost.

(1) *Christ goes in quest of men.*—He had His eye on Zacchæus when he climbed into the sycomore tree. He knew where the objects of His pity were to be found, and directed His course and shaped His plans that He might meet with them. He did not sit in solemn pomp, did not dwell in quiet glory, awaiting the approach of the miserable and guilty. His love was not of the easy nature that merely listens to the cry of woe and want, that stretches out the hand when power is supplicated—but of the nobler kind that goes after the lost and ruined. He was the missionary of salvation, not only its magnificent dispenser.

[1] David Brown, *Memoir of John Duncan*, 143.

¶ A story is told of Garibaldi that in one of his arduous campaigns, one evening when he and his troops were preparing to encamp for the night, they came upon a shepherd who told Garibaldi that he had lost a lamb and was going out to search for it. The general gave permission to his followers to go out and search for the lost lamb, but, as darkness fell, they turned in tired for the night's rest. Not so, however, with the leader himself, for in the early morning, Garibaldi emerged from the mist carrying the lost lamb.

"O Shepherd with the bleeding Feet,
Good Shepherd with the pleading Voice,
What seekest Thou from hill to hill?
Sweet were the valley pastures, sweet
The sound of flocks that bleat their joys,
And eat and drink at will.
Is one worth seeking, when Thou hast of Thine
Ninety and nine?"

"How should I stay My bleeding Feet,
How should I hush My pleading Voice?
I who chose death and clomb a hill,
Accounting gall and wormwood sweet,
That hundredfold might bud My joys
For love's sake and good will.
I seek My one, for all there bide of Mine
Ninety and nine."[1]

¶ A beautiful scene is that which shows us the Bishop seeking for one of his flock, a little girl who had wandered into the wilderness. Jeannie de Nord was a child of ten years, with a complexion scarcely darker than an ordinary English gipsy. Her father, old de Nord, had left her with an aunt while he went away some distance to hunt. The aunt was neglectful of her little charge, and Jeannie unable to bear this started in search of her father. So little did the aunt care that two days elapsed before the word spread that Jeannie was lost.

No sooner did the Bishop hear of it than, like the true shepherd he was, he started with others in search of the little wanderer. They pushed on over the snow, following the girl's tracks, for she had taken her snow-shoes with her. She had no food or blanket, and the nights were cold, and starving wolves roamed the forests. And where was Jeannie? She had reached her father's abandoned camp one night, cold and tired. Groping about, she found his gun, which had been left there, and with the cunning of the wild she

[1] Christina G. Rossetti.

discharged the weapon, and from the spark thus obtained started a fire, which kept her warm through the night. All the next day she wandered in vain, searching for her father, and, tired and hungry, crept back to the abandoned camp and fell asleep. When she next opened her eyes, it was to see standing before her the tall figure of the anxious Bishop, and to feel his strong loving arms around her as he lifted her from the ground.

The shepherd had found the lost lamb, but oh, at what a cost! The Bishop's clothes were soaking from the overflowing streams they had crossed as they wandered about, and he could hardly reach Fort Simpson, so great were the cramps which seized him, and for days he endured great suffering. But what did it matter? Little Jeannie de Nord was safe, and none the worse for her experience.[1]

(2) *That quest is continuous.*—The quest is not exhausted by one act, or satisfied with one response. It is not merely that God seeks us in the hour of our proud and vain revolt, when our wilful heart bids Him a proud defiance. He does seek us then, and, by the thousand ingenuities of a love that is deeper than we can ever know, strives to woo us to reciprocal love and cleansing affection. But He goes infinitely farther than that. He is ever seeking us in the deeper reaches of our life, in its innermost and most sacred shrines, that He may find us in our largest capacities and win us absolutely to Himself. Every day of our life, when by some disloyalty of our heart we stray the least bit from Him; when by some unholy thought our mind is stained and made unworthy to be His temple, when by some act of selfishness the old bad life has a momentary supremacy, He quickly follows in pursuit of us to call and bring us home. He lights His light in our conscience and smites us with shame; He reveals His love and melts us into cleansing tears; He reveals His face and compels us by the sweet compulsion of a great attraction.

That was the Shepherd of the flock; He knew
 The distant voice of one poor sheep astray;
It had forsaken Him, but He was true,
 And listen'd for its bleating night and day.
Lost in a pitfall, yet alive it lay,
 To breathe the faint sad call that He would know;
But now the slighted fold was far away,
 And no approaching footstep soothed its woe.

[1] *An Apostle of the North: Memoirs of Bishop Bompas*, 175.

Oh! would He now but come and claim His own,
How more than precious His restoring care!
How sweet the pasture of His choice alone,
How bright the dullest path if He were there!
How well the pain of rescue it could bear,
Held in the shelter of His strong embrace!
With Him it would find herbage anywhere,
And springs of endless life in every place.

And so He came and raised it from the clay,
While evil beasts went disappointed by.
He bore it home along the fearful way
In the soft light of His rejoicing eye.
And thou fallen soul, afraid to live or die
In the deep pit that will not set thee free,
Lift up to Him the helpless homeward cry,
For all that tender love is seeking thee.[1]

¶ Many a time it is in strange places that Christ comes upon His own. One tells of her finding in an artless story. Her heart had been touched but not melted, till one day in the garden she saw an apple tree in blossom, and as she stood under it she was flooded with the thought of the love of God. So it became true of her:—

Beneath the apple tree
There I espoused thee,
There I gave thee my hand,
And there thou wast redeemed,
Where thy mother was betrayed.

Another heart, also stirred by desire, resolved at last that she would read her Bible straight through till she found her Saviour. At last she came upon the words, "I am the way," and there her wanderings ended. She had been found. A saint tells how the Shepherd found her in an Andalusian convent, where the fountain was the only moving sounding thing in the dead noon-day silence, when there was not a breath to stir the lemon tree or pomegranate bush. Of another, it is told that he was found out by his Master while committing robbery. Another was found by Jesus Christ when he was breaking the heart of his old mother by mockeries of religion. A preacher, well known in his day, was found when listening to an old melodrama that ended with a sailor's drinking a glass of gin before he was hung, and saying for his last words, "Here's to the prosperity of the British nation and the salvation

[1] F. W. Faber.

of my immortal soul." Down went the curtain, and down went the man, for he ran home with all his might. He had been struck to the quick by the words, "the salvation of my immortal soul," and in his chamber Christ found him.[1]

¶ After the lecture in the dissecting-room in the Glasgow University one day a student, usually all vivacity and chatter, was observed by his friend to be very silent. Asked why, he said, "A curious thing happened in the laboratory to-day. Pointing to the body on which we were working, the professor suddenly said, 'Gentlemen, that was once tenanted by an immortal soul.'" The young man had never had a thought like this about the bodies he was dissecting before. So Christ startled the world. He came into its dissecting-rooms and operating theatres, its laboratories of industry, its barracks and camps, where men were holding life cheap and exploiting thousands, for the sake of gain or fame for the few, and He said, "Gentlemen, every man and woman, ay, and little child on earth, is an immortal soul and of infinite value to God the heavenly Father." . . . That was Christ's discovery of the individual to the surprise and astonishment of the world.[2]

4. He comes to *save* the lost. It is interesting to discover that the word "salvation" as first used by Jesus did not have a distinctly religious meaning. He used it of those whom He healed of bodily sickness. "Daughter," said the Master to the invalid woman who pressed through the throng to touch the hem of His garment, "be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole." And it is written in St. Mark's Gospel, "They laid the sick in the market places, and besought him that they might touch if it were but the border of his garment: and as many as touched him were made whole." "Made whole" in these verses translates the same Greek word as is sometimes translated "saved." Saved folks were folks who were made whole, filled full of health, fulfilling their purpose. Up to this day, Zacchæus had been like a sick man, just a fragment of a man, a man who was able to use only a part of himself; just as a sick man is a man who cannot use his eyes, or his limbs, or his head, or whatever part of him is afflicted. When the sick man is made whole he lives through all his being; he no longer uses only a portion of his body; every organ fulfils its functions perfectly. Zacchæus's conscience was

[1] W. Robertson Nicoll, *Sunday Evening*, 33.
[2] R. J. Drummond, *Faith's Certainties*, 328.

diseased. When Jesus touched him that day, his conscience began to work, and, with the conscience in perfect health, and the love in him claiming those who had need of him, the publican began to live through and through all his manhood. Henceforth no part was diseased, no organ was atrophied; he was a whole man. This then is Jesus' idea of salvation. It is not a matter of the future, it concerns the present; it is not rescue from a future hell, but rescue from a present self; it is not rescue for a future heaven, it is rescue for a present service. Salvation is living as a son through all one's being; salvation is living as a soul for other souls.

¶ A priest had occasion once to interview a great doctor about the terrible case of a woman of high social position who had become the slave of drink. The doctor was a man of great force and ability, and of unwearying devotion; but he was what would be called a sceptic and a materialist. The priest asked if the case was hopeless; the great doctor shrugged his shoulders. "Yes," he said, "pathologically speaking, it is hopeless; there may be periods of recovery, but the course that the case will normally run will be a series of relapses, each more serious and of longer duration than the last." "Is there no chance of recovery on any line that you could suggest?" said the priest. The two looked at each other, both good men and true. "Well," said the doctor after a pause, "this is more in your line than mine; the only possible chance lies in the will, and that can only be touched through an emotion. I have seen a religious emotion successful, where everything else failed." The priest smiled and said, "I suppose that would seem to you a species of delusion? You would not admit that there was any reality behind it?" "Yes," said the doctor, "a certain reality, no doubt; the emotional processes are at present somewhat obscure from the scientific point of view; it is a forlorn hope." "Yes," said the priest, "and it is thus the kind of task for which I and those of my calling feel bound to volunteer."[1]

(1) *He saves by pardon.*—It is done, first of all, by the complete pardon of all the sinner's sins. The very instant that a man trusts Christ with all his heart, the past is blotted out as if it had never existed: all the sins he has ever done in thought, in word, in deed, however crimson in dye, go at once; they are sunk as in the sea, never to be found again. And this is done upon this one solitary condition, that the man believes in Jesus; and even that

[1] A. C. Benson, *From a College Window*, 218.

is not a condition, for He that bade him believe enables him to believe, and gives him the faith which saves his soul.

¶ Men are not, according to the gospel system, pardoned on account of their belief of the pardon, but they are sanctified by a belief of that pardon, and unless the belief of it produces this effect, neither the pardon nor the belief are of any use. The pardon of the Gospel is a spiritual medicine: faith is nothing more than the taking of that medicine; and if the spiritual health or sanctification is not produced, neither the spiritual medicine nor the taking of the medicine are of any avail; they have failed of their object.[1]

(2) *He saves by bestowal of a new nature.*—From the moment that a man believes in Jesus his nature becomes different from what it was before; he receives a new heart—another influence takes possession of him; another love engrosses him. When a man is absorbed by some master-passion, what a different man he becomes! The passion for wealth will work marvels; we have known idle persons become very diligent, and profuse voluptuaries become even self-denying and mortifying to their flesh, in their ambition to acquire riches. Now, God gives us another passion, the passion of love to God in Christ, and that becomes a master-principle and rules the entire man. He who loved self now loves God and lives for Him.

¶ One part of the good news which Christ told us about God was that God would free us from evil, awake in us a new life, and open before us boundless possibilities of growth; and He showed us in His own life that men could be freed from evil. He lived before us the new life; and He made manifest the spiritual perfection of man. "This, then," said those who followed Him, and notably St. Paul, "this which God did in His Son Jesus, He will do in all His other sons." Into this perfect life which was made manifest in Christ, we are all to grow—growing up into Him in all things who is the Head, even Christ.[2]

[1] *Letters of Thomas Erskine of Linlathen*, i. 376.
[2] Stopford A. Brooke, *Sunshine and Shadow*, 105

The Impenitent City.

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The Impenitent City.

And when he drew nigh, he saw the city and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known in this day, even thou, the things which belong unto peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.—Luke xix. 41, 42.

1. The Saviour's tears were a startling contrast to the scene of rejoicing to which this incident is appended. It was in the midst of the Triumphal Entry that this occurred, when all were exulting and shouts of hallelujah thrilled the air. The simple pious hearts of the disciples were glad at this evident acceptance of their Master, and they anticipated a speedy capture of Jerusalem itself for Christ, when His cause would lay hold of the whole nation and great and glorious events would ensue. They hardly knew what they expected; but, in any case, it was to be a mighty triumph for Christ, and salvation for Israel. But as the joyful procession swept round the shoulder of the hill, and the fair city gleamed into sight, a hush came over the exulting throng; for the Lord was weeping. He had no bright and futile illusions. A wave of excitement like that which had transported the disciples could not blind Him to the actual facts of the case. He knew that He had lived, and would die, in vain, so far as that hard and proud capital was concerned. He knew that He was rejected of rulers and people; and that ears and hearts were deaf to His message. As He looked at the beautiful city, it was not with pride but with anguish. He knew that city and nation were doomed. They had had their day of visitation, and were still having it—but the sands were fast running out. In compassionate grief He yearned over them still, weeping for their blindness and hardness of heart. What a pathetic scene is here recalled to our imagination! The gay and careless city smiling in the sunlight, with eager crowds of busy men full of their interests and pleasures, full of their great religious celebration about to be kept —and the Saviour looking down on it all, weeping. They were

throwing away their last chance, following false lights, and dreaming false hopes, seeking false sources of peace, stopping their ears against the voice of wisdom and of love. "If thou hadst known in this day, even thou, the things which belong unto peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes."

2. Those who heard Him did not understand. Nevertheless He was right. He saw things as they were, not as they seemed. His was that prophet-power which is not so truly the vision of things future as of things present, a power which is less intellectual than moral, which in the sphere of the spiritual is the equivalent of the scientific faculty in the physical order—the power of discerning in human history the reign of law, that necessity by which effect follows upon cause, by which evil conduct must bring to pass evil fortune. He saw, and only He, how things really were with Jerusalem and its people, and therefore He saw what must happen to Jerusalem. So to Him the glowing landscape and the city shining on it like a gem were the illusion, and His doom-picture was the reality; the beauty and peace and glory were the mask; the features behind it were pain, horror, desolation. Jesus was right, and all He wept over came to pass in fullest and most bitter measure.

They climbed the Eastern slope
Which leads from Jordan up to Olivet;
And they who earlier dreams could not forget
Were flushed with eager hope.

They gained the crest, and lo!
The marble temple in the sunset gleamed,
And golden light upon its turrets streamed,
As on the stainless snow.

They shout for joy of heart,
But He, the King, looks on as one in grief;
To heart o'erburdened weeping brings relief,
The unbidden tear-drops start:

"Ah, had'st thou known, e'en thou
In this thy day the things that make for peace;"
Alas! no strivings now can work release,
The night is closing now.

"On all thy high estate,
Thy temple-courts and palaces of pride,
Thy pleasant pictures and thy markets wide,
Is written now 'Too late.'

Time was there might have been
The waking up to life of higher mood,
The knowledge of the only Wise and Good,
Within thy portals seen;

But now the past is past,
The last faint light by blackening clouds is hid;
Thy heaped-up sins each hope of grace forbid,
The sky is all o'ercast;

And soon from out the cloud
Will burst the storm that lays thee low in dust,
Till shrine and palace, homes of hate and lust
Are wrapt in fiery shroud."[1]

Let us consider:—

I. Jerusalem's Day of Privilege.
II. Her Rejection of the Light.
III. The Tears of the Redeemer.

I.

The Day of Privilege.

1. There are seasons of special privilege. Jesus here speaks of "a time of visitation." Properly speaking, that means an overseeing. That is the strict meaning of the original word. It is thus used to describe the office of an Apostle, in the Acts of the Apostles, and the office of a bishop, in St. Paul's First Epistle to Timothy; and, from this employment of the word in Scripture, it has come to be applied to the court—for such it is—which from time to time, a bishop is bound by the old law of the Church to hold, in order to review the state of his diocese. But this word is more commonly applied in the Bible to God's activity than to man's; and a visitation of God is sometimes penal or judicial, and sometimes it is a season of grace and mercy. The

[1] E. H. Plumptre.

day of visitation of which St. Peter speaks, in which the heathen shall glorify God for the good works of Christians, is, we cannot doubt, the day of judgment. And Job uses the Hebrew equivalent to describe the heavy trials which had been sent to test his patience. On the other hand, in the language of Scripture, God visits man in grace and mercy—as He did the Israelites in Egypt after Joseph's death; as He visited Sarah in one generation, and Hannah in another; as He visited His flock, to use Zechariah's expression, in Babylon. It was such a visitation as this that our Lord had in view. He Himself had held it; and when He spoke it was not yet concluded.

(1) *This visitation was unobtrusive.*—In the Advent of the Redeemer there was nothing outwardly remarkable to the men of that day. It was almost nothing. Of all the historians of that period few indeed are found to mention it. This is a thing which we at this day can scarcely understand; for to us the blessed Advent of our Lord is the brightest page in the world's history; but to them it was far otherwise. Remember for one moment what the Advent of our Lord was to all outward appearance. He seemed, let it be said reverently, to the rulers of those days, a fanatical freethinker. They heard of His miracles, but they appeared nothing remarkable to them; there was nothing there on which to fasten their attention. They heard that some of the populace had been led away, and now and then, it may be, some of His words reached their ears, but to them they were hard to be understood, full of mystery; or else they roused every evil passion in their hearts, so stern and uncompromising was the morality they taught. They put aside these words in that brief period, and the day of grace passed.

¶ There was nothing of the outward pageant of royalty to greet the son of David. There were no guards, no palace, no throne, no royal livery, no currency bearing the king's image and superscription. All these things had passed into the hands of the foreign conqueror, or, in parts of the country, into the hands of princes who had the semblance of independence without its reality. There was not even the amount of circumstance and state which attends the reception of a visitor to some modern institution—a visitor who only represents the majesty of some old prerogative or of some earthly throne. As He, Israel's true King, visits Jerusalem, He almost reminds us of the descendant of an ancient

and fallen family returning in secret to the old home of his race. Everything is for him instinct with precious memories. Every stone is dear to him, while he himself is forgotten. He wanders about unnoticed, unobserved, or with only such notice as courtesy may accord to a presumed stranger. He is living amid thoughts which are altogether unshared by men whom he meets, as he moves silently and sadly among the records of the past, and he passes away from sight as he came, with his real station and character generally unrecognized, if indeed he is not dismissed as an upstart with contempt and insult. So it was with Jerusalem and its Divine Visitor. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not."[1]

(2) *The day of visitation is limited.*—Jerusalem's day was narrowed up into the short space of three years and a half. After that, God still pleaded with individuals; but the national cause, as a cause, was gone. Jerusalem's doom was sealed when Christ pronounced those words.

Here was His last word to the chosen people, the last probation, the last opportunity. We may reverently say that there was no more after that to be done. Each prophet contributed something which others could not; each had filled a place in the long series of visitations which no other could fill. Already, long ago, Jerusalem had been once destroyed, after a great neglect of opportunity. The Book of Jeremiah is one long and pathetic commentary on the blindness and obstinacy of kings, priests, prophets, and people which preceded the Chaldæan invasion, and which rendered it inevitable. And still that ruin, vast and, for the time, utter as it was, had been followed by a reconstruction—that long and bitter exile by a return. But history will not go on for ever repeating events which contradict the possibility of change and renewal. One greater visitation awaited Jerusalem; one more utter ruin—and each was to be the last.

¶ After the Passion and Crucifixion of Jesus no cause of justice, no ministry of truth, no service of one's fellow-men, need despair. Though the People, Religion and the State together triumph over them, beyond the brief day of such a triumph the days—to use a prophetic promise which had often rung through Jerusalem—the days are coming. The centuries, patient ministers of God, are waiting as surely for them as they waited for Christ beyond His Cross. Thus, then, did the City and the

[1] H. P. Liddon.

Man confront each other: that great Fortress, with her rival and separately entrenched forces, for the moment confederate against Him; that Single Figure, sure of His sufficiency for all their needs, and, though His flesh might shrink from it, conscious that the death which they conspired for Him was His Father's will in the redemption of mankind. As for the embattled City herself, lifted above her ravines and apparently impregnable, she sat prepared only for the awful siege and destruction which He foresaw; while all her spiritual promises, thronging from centuries of hope and prophecy, ran out from her shining into the West; a sunset to herself, but the dawn of a new day to the world beyond.[1]

II.

The Rejection of the Light.

1. The Jews were blind to their opportunity. They knew not the day of their visitation. There is the ignorance we cannot help, which is part of our circumstances in this life, which is imposed on us by Providence. And such ignorance as this, so far as it extends, effaces responsibility. God will never hold a man accountable for knowledge which He knows to be out of his reach. But there is also ignorance, and a great deal of it in many lives, for which we are ourselves responsible, and which would not have embarrassed us now, if we had made the best of our opportunities in past times. And just as a man who, being drunk, is held to be responsible for the outrage which he commits without knowing what he was doing, because he is undoubtedly responsible for getting into this condition of brutal insensibility at all, so God holds us all to be accountable for an ignorance which He knows not to be due to our nature. Now, this was the case with the men of Jerusalem at that day. Had they studied their prophets earnestly and sincerely, had they refused to surrender themselves to political dreams which flattered their self-love, and which coloured all their thoughts and hopes, they would have seen in Jesus of Nazareth the Divine Visitor whose coming Israel had for long ages been expecting.

¶ There is a way of blindness by hardening the heart. Let us not conceal this truth from ourselves. God blinds the eye, but it

[1] G. A. Smith, *Jerusalem*, ii. 578.

is in the appointed course of His providential dealings. If a man will not see, the law is he shall not see; if he will not do what is right when he knows the right, then right shall become to him wrong, and wrong shall seem to be right. We read that God hardened Pharaoh's heart, that He blinded Israel. It is impossible to look at these cases of blindness without perceiving in them something of Divine action. Even at the moment when the Romans were at their gates, Jerusalem still dreamed of security; and when the battering-ram was at the tower of Antonia, the priests were celebrating, in fancied safety, their daily sacrifices. From the moment when our Master spake, there was deep stillness over her until her destruction; like the strange and unnatural stillness before the thunder-storm, when every breath seems hushed, and every leaf may be almost heard moving in the motionless air; and all this calm and stillness is but the prelude to the moment when the east and west are lighted up with the red flashes, and the whole creation seems to reel. Such was the blindness of that nation which would not know the day of her visitation.[1]

2. The blindness of the Jews was the blindness of moral indifference. For years they had been sinking into cold spiritual indifference, while they were clinging all the more strongly to the outward formalities of religion. And then came their rejection of Christ, which consummated their ruin. They knew what tithes the poor man must pay into the treasury, but they could not understand a Christ who came to heal the broken-hearted. They knew that Jerusalem was the place where men ought to worship, and that the Samaritans were heretics; they could not understand One who came to give men life and rest in God. It was their cold-hearted indifference that thus blinded their eyes to the mission of Jesus, and it was this that caused them to destroy Him. They had found a Man who said religion was a reality—who spoke in kindling words of a spiritual world, and pointed the weary to an all-present Father; and when they found they could not put to shame a truth that clashed with their cold-heartedness, they hurried Him to the judgment-hall and the cross.

¶ If we go back to the time of the Greeks, and ask what to the Greek mind was the greatest sin, we find that it was insolence.

[1] F. W. Robertson.

To them insolence meant the failure of a man to realize what was his true attitude to life, to understand that he was bound, if he would be a true man, to face life boldly and fearlessly with all its issues, to think through its problems, to recognize the limits under which his life had to be lived. Still the same thing is needed. We still ask you to look at your life straight, to see what it means, to see what are the things that will destroy it. And we are forced to conclude with the old Greeks that it is insolence which destroys a man's life. What the Greeks called insolence, we call irreverence; and irreverence is at the bottom of it indifference. It means the want of self-sacrifice, of self-restraint, the want of manliness, the want of a desire to think things out, to face life and its issues broadly and courageously.[1]

3. Such a process of hardening may be very gradual. Little by little we lose our keen delight in God, our warm loyalty to our Saviour, our exquisite pleasure in noble things, our cordial sympathy with spiritual people and their aims; little by little we decline into godlessness and worldliness. There is a growing deadness of nerve, a creeping paralysis which leaves us more and more untouched and unmoved by the high and glorious things of our faith, which renders us more and more careless about the tragic possibilities of life.

Life must be a movement—a progress of some kind. We cannot stand still—rise or fall we must. Unless, therefore, we have a restraining power within us conquering those hidden evil tendencies, our life must be gradually sinking. But indifference —the mere absence of positive Christian earnestness—has no restraining influence. Not what we are not, but what we are, forms character. We resemble that which we supremely love. That rectitude of life and conduct which is not the result of choice or effort, and which may exist in the absence of temptation, is purely negative, and, unless supported by some earnest positive principle, is in peril when the slumbering evil tendencies are wakened into power by temptation. We may go a step farther, and affirm that spiritual indifference actually prepares the way for open sin. "He that is not with me is against me," said Christ, and then followed His parable of the unclean spirit returning in sevenfold might to the empty house. The mere expulsion of evil which leaves the heart vacant and indifferent is a false reforma-

[1] *Life and Letters of Mandell Creighton*, ii. 26.

tion. Take away corrupt love, and leave the soul's chamber empty, and it will come again in gigantic force. Thus indifference is the commencement of a blindfold descent into spiritual ruin.

¶ You have seen the snow-flakes falling—at first they lay like beautiful winter flowers, but gradually they formed an icy crust that hardened and thickened with every snow shower. So, a man may receive the truth of Christ in the freezing atmosphere of cold indifference, until he is girded round with a mass of dead belief which no spiritual influence can penetrate.[1]

4. These Jews knew not the day of their visitation and yet they were always expecting it. Their prophets had foretold it; in their prayers they cried out for it. Even at this very time they were looking for their Messiah. But they had made up their minds as to the way in which the visitation would be made. When at last it came in God's way—so simply, so quietly—they could not receive it.

How many there are who are still living in carelessness, never really ranging themselves on the side of Christ, never really giving to Him their hearts and souls; and all the time they have a sort of vague idea that some day the Lord will come and visit their hearts! They do not mean to die in their irreligion. They half imagine that suddenly and unexpectedly God will call them and convert them; then the King will enthrone Himself in their hearts, and all will be well; then they must needs give up sin, and delight in religion. So now they are content to wait; till that day it does not matter much, they think, what lives they lead. All the time Jesus is with them; but they know Him not; they know not the time of their visitation; they are expecting a visitation of some strange, sensational, or terrible kind. If some storm or tempest of passion shook their being, they might yield to that; if God were to afflict them by laying them permanently on a bed of sickness, or by taking from them all that makes life dear, they would count that as a visitation of God, and would expect to be converted. Our ordinary language seems to countenance this notion. It is "a visitation of God," we say, when a city is smitten with cholera or plague, or when death cannot be accounted for. It would be well for us all if we could realize more fully that, although God's voice may be heard in the whirl-

[1] E. L. Hull.

wind and the storm, it is more often heard in the quiet whisper, speaking lovingly to the conscience.

Where are thy moments? Dost thou let them run
Unheeded through time's glass? Is thy work done?
Hast thou no duties unfulfilled? Not one
That needs completion?
Thou would'st not cast thy money to the ground;
Or, if thou did'st, perchance it might be found
By one who, schooled in poverty's harsh round,
Knew not repletion.

But thy time lost, is lost to all and thee;
Swiftly 'tis added to eternity,
And for it answerable thou must be;
So have a care.
Gather thy moments, lest they swell to hours;
Stir up thy youthful and still dormant powers;
Now only canst thou plant Heaven's fadeless flowers,
Therefore, beware.

III.

The Tears of Jesus.

"He saw the city and wept over it." He wept—wept aloud (there had been only silent tears at Bethany, for the two Greek words imply this distinction)—He wept aloud as the city of Jerusalem burst on His sight. The spot has been identified by modern travellers, where a turn in the path brings into view the whole city. "There stood before Him the City of ten thousand memories, with the morning sunlight blazing on the marble pinnacles and gilded roofs of the Temple buildings"; and as He gazed, all the pity within Him over-mastered His human spirit, and He broke into a passion of lamentation, at the sight of the city, which it was too late for Him—the Deliverer—to save; at the thought of the ruin of the nation, which He—the King—had come to rule. "If thou hadst known—Oh! that thou hadst known—the things that belong unto thy peace!" As if He had said, "Thou art called Jerusalem, which means 'They shall see peace.' Oh that thou wert Jerusalem in truth and hadst known

the things that make for thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes."

The Son of God in tears
The Angels wondering see:
Hast thou no wonder, O my soul?
He shed those tears for thee!

He wept that we might weep,
Might weep our sin and shame,
He wept to shew His love for us,
And bid us love the same.

Then tender be our hearts,
Our eyes in sorrow dim,
Till every tear from every eye
Is wiped away by Him![1]

¶ There is no more moving sight than a strong man in tears. Only the strong can truly weep. Tears are then the overflow of the heart. They come when words are powerless; they go where deeds cannot follow. They are the speech of souls past speaking.[2]

1. It was not for Himself that He wept. The Saviour quite forgot Himself. Conscious as He was, perfectly conscious, of the terrible suffering and shame which awaited Him, He thought not of it; His whole soul was taken up with the city which lay before Him, glittering in the brilliant light of early morning. The tide of sorrow and regret which that sight set a-flowing submerged all other feelings for the moment. It is proper to man that only one very strong emotion can find room within his breast at the same moment; and our Lord was man, true man, made like unto us in all points, sin alone excepted. So He forgot for the moment all about Himself; His heart went out to the city which lay before Him, and He wept over it.

He measured the worth, or rather He estimated the worthlessness, of those greetings which greeted Him now. He knew that all this joy, this jubilant burst, as it seemed, of a people's gladness, was but as fire among straw, which blazes up for an instant, and then as quickly expires, leaving nothing but a handful of black

[1] H. F. Lyte, *Poems*, 82. [2] R. W. Barbour, *Thoughts*, 52.

ashes behind it. He knew that of this giddy thoughtless multitude, many who now cried, "Hosanna; blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord," would, before one short week was ended, join their voices with the voices of them who exclaimed, "Crucify him, crucify him; we have no king but Cæsar"; and He wept, not for Himself, but for them, for the doom which they were preparing for their city, for their children, for themselves.

¶ The contrast was, indeed, terrible between the Jerusalem that rose before Christ in all its beauty, glory, and security, and the Jerusalem which He saw in vision dimly rising on the sky, with the camp of the enemy round about it on every side, hugging it closer and closer in deadly embrace, and the very "stockade" which the Roman Legions raised around it; then, another scene in the shifting panorama, and the city laid with the ground, and the gory bodies of her children among her ruins; and yet another scene: the silence and desolateness of death by the Hand of God—not one stone left upon another! We know only too well how literally this vision has become reality; and yet, though uttered as prophecy by Christ, and its reason so clearly stated, Israel to this day knows not the things which belong unto its peace, and the upturned scattered stones of its dispersion are crying out in testimony against it. But to this day, also, do the tears of Christ plead with the Church on Israel's behalf, and His words bear within them precious seed of promise.[1]

2. He wept over the doom of the impenitent city that He loved. He foresaw the hour when the Roman army would level its walls, destroy its Temple, and scatter its people through all lands; when the spot that had been so long known as the glory of Judæa should be recognized only by its ruins. And to Christ there must have been something profoundly sad in that prospect. For ages Jerusalem had been the home of truth and the temple of the Eternal. For ages its people had been the solitary worshippers and witnesses to the true Lord of men. And the thought that a nation called and chosen of old, a nation whose forefathers had been true to God through perils and captivities, should fall from its high standing through falseness to its Lord, and, shorn of its ancient glory, should wander through the world, crowned with mockery, misery, and scorn, might well fill the heart of the compassionate Christ with sorrow. But yet we cannot suppose that

[1] Edersheim, *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, ii. 369.

the downfall of Jerusalem and the scattering of its people were the chief objects of His pity. It was the men themselves—the men of Jerusalem, who, by the rejection of God's messengers, and of Himself, the greatest of all, were bringing down those calamities —that awakened His compassion. He saw other temples than Solomon's falling into ruin—the temples of the souls that had spurned His voice; and the ruin of those spirits moved Him to tears.

3. He knew that this dreadful doom might have been averted. There were things which belonged to Jerusalem's peace, and which would have secured it, if only she would have known them. They were things which He had brought with Him. The guilty city, the murderess of the prophets, she that had been a provocation almost from her first day until now, might have washed her and made her clean from all that blood and from all that filthiness; she might have become, not in name only, but in deed, "the city of peace," if only she would have consented first to be "the city of righteousness," to receive aright Him who had come, "meek and having salvation," and bringing near to her the things of her everlasting peace. There was no dignity, there was no glory, that might not have been hers. She might have been a name and a praise in all the earth. From that mountain of the Lord's house the streams of healing, the waters of the river of life, might have gone forth for the healing of all the bitter waters of the world. But no; she chose rather to be herself the bitterest fountain of all. As she had refused in the times past to hear God's servants, so now she refused to hear His Son, stopped her ears like the deaf adder, made her heart hard as adamant that she might not hear Him.

4. But He knew that His bitter tears were unavailing now. The desolation of the beloved city was a catastrophe that even the prevailing work of His redemption was powerless to avert. "Now they are hid from thine eyes." This is a deliverance which lies beyond the limit even of the salvation which Christ is to accomplish. "Thou knewest not the time of thy visitation." All the opportunities afforded by the Divine forbearance to those who slew the prophets, who stoned the messengers, and who were about

to kill the heir, and culminating in this day of Messiah's unmistakable claim upon the allegiance of God's people, had passed unheeded and unused. Now, once and for all, the things that belong to peace are hidden. Jerusalem Christ cannot save. Its destruction He cannot turn away. Therefore, He breaks forth into a passionate lament, like Rachel weeping for her children—"And when he drew nigh, he beheld the city, and wept over it."

¶ Jerusalem is the head and heart of the nation, the seat of the religious power in which Israel is personified. Why then must this power be blind and obstinate, angry and offended? Why should these high priests, elders, masters of the Law and guardians of the traditions, these leaders of the chosen people, fail to understand what the simple, the poor, the humble, the despised have comprehended? Why do their minds blaspheme while the minds of the people welcome with acclamations the Chosen One of God? Such thoughts overwhelmed and distracted the soul of Jesus. There is still time for them to acknowledge Him; they can still proclaim Him Messiah, and save Israel, to bestow upon it the peace of God. The unutterable anguish of Jesus is not for His own fate, to that He is resigned; it is the fate of His people and of the city which is on the point of demanding His execution; and this blindness will let loose upon Israel nameless calamities. The hierarchy, which despises the true Messiah, will be carried away by its false patriotism into every excess and every frenzy. It will endeavour in vain to control the people in their feverish impatience for deliverance. The Zealots will provoke implacable warfare, and, in grasping after empty glory and empty liberty, their fanaticism will be the unconscious instrument of the vengeance of God. Jesus knew it; the future was before His eyes; He saw Jerusalem besieged, invested, laid waste with fire and sword, her children slaughtered, and her houses, her monuments, her palaces, her Temple itself levelled with the ground.[1]

5. And yet, in spite of all, He persisted in His endeavours to reclaim the lost. He threw Himself into the work of rousing and alarming Jerusalem, as though its future might instantly be transformed. From the Mount of Olives He descended straightway to the Temple, and the last week of His life was spent in daily intercourse with its chief priests. How vain, as it then appeared, were all His words! How little availed His sternest tones to stir the slumberous pulses of His time! How unmoved

[1] Father Didon, *Jesus Christ*, ii. 175.

(save by a bitter and personal animosity) were the leaders and teachers to whom He spoke! And when that scornful indifference on their part was exchanged at last for a distinctive enmity, with what needless prodigality, as doubtless it seemed even to some of His own disciples, He flung away His life! Flung it away? Yes, but only how soon and how triumphantly to take it again! The defeat of Golgotha meant the victory of the Resurrection. The failure of the cross was the triumph of the Crucified; and, though by living and preaching He could not conquer the indifference or awaken the apathy of Israel, by dying and rising again He did. It was the chief priests who amid the anguish of Calvary were the most scornful spectators and the most relentless foes. It was "a great company of the chief priests," who, on the day of Pentecost, scarce fifty days after that dark and bitter Friday, "were obedient unto the faith." And thus the tide was turned, and though Jerusalem was not rescued from the vandal hordes of Titus, Jerusalem and Judæa alike became the home and the cradle of the infant Church.

The Winning of the Soul.

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The Winning of the Soul.

In your patience ye shall win your souls.—Luke xxi. 19.

Our Lord's sojourn upon earth was now drawing to a close; and, in proportion to the magnitude of approaching events, His statements rose in dignity and importance. Not like a false teacher, seducing with pleasant prospects, but as one who would not conceal the dark future, however disheartening it might be, He draws up the veil, and bids His disciples behold, as in a mirror, the scenes of trouble and conflict in which they would have to wrestle; He causes to pass before their eyes, as in a vision, the fiery persecutions and sanguinary struggles in which Christianity was to be cradled and baptized; and, addressing His followers as those who were to share in the suffering—nay, to go hand in hand into the furnace—He assures them with the promise "In your patience ye shall win your souls."

¶ In the Authorized Version this verse is treated as if it were merely an exhortation to the disciples to be patient under the pressure of persecution and peril. But that is not what our Lord said at all. He did not bid these disciples possess their souls in patience. He said a far more striking and significant thing. He said that it was by patient endurance they were to win, to get possession of, their souls—"Ye shall win your souls"! It is a notable and suggestive saying. It is perfectly true that some of the commentators take all the suggestiveness out of it by explaining that it really means nothing more than this: that, if the disciples remain steadfast in the midst of all their troubles, and do not turn apostate, then they shall win life in the resurrection of the just. This is, indeed, how the Twentieth-century Testament translates the verse: "By your endurance you shall win yourselves life." But I cannot help feeling that such a translation is a case of conventionalizing and stereotyping what is a very unconventional and unusual expression. At any rate, I am going to take the phrase at its face value. "Ye shall win—ye shall gain possession of—your souls." And the main and

central suggestion of the phrase to me is this: our souls are not given to us ready-made, finished and complete. They have to be made. They are prizes to be won. We do not start with them —we gradually get possession of them. "Life," says Browning somewhere, "is a stuff to try the soul's strength on and educe the man." I know of no sentence that constitutes a more illuminating commentary on this word of Christ's. The soul is not an inheritance into which we are born; it is something we make and fashion and win for ourselves out of the varied discipline and experience of life.[1]

¶ In one of Westcott's letters he has this most significant reference to the words of the text: "Of all the changes in the Revised Version, that in Luke xxi. 19 is the one to which perhaps I look with most hope. We think of our souls as something given us to complete, and not as something given to us to win." It is a most suggestive distinction, and the failure to recognize it has been fraught with perilous mistakes. There is a very big difference between possessing a thing and making it entirely your own. For instance, I may possess a book, but the winning of its treasure is quite another thing. I may have come into possession of a musical instrument, but to woo and win its secret melody is quite another thing. It was one thing for Britain to come into possession of the Transvaal; it is quite another thing to win the people of the Transvaal to our rule. And these analogies may help us in the interpretation of the text. To win the soul is to bring all its rebel powers into willing homage to King Jesus. To win the soul is to elicit all its latent music and cause it to spring forth in constant praise. To win the soul is gradually to constrain all that is within us to praise and bless His holy name.[2]

I.

The Promise.

"Ye shall win your souls."

1. What is meant by a man winning his own soul? We can understand winning others to the side of right; but here it speaks of a man winning his own soul as if he could be, so to speak, the maker of his own soul, along with its Creator. If we thoughtfully turn over the subject for a little while we shall see that there

[1] J. D. Jones, *The Hope of the Gospel*, 98.

[2] J. H. Jowett, in *The British Congregationalist*, March 4, 1909, p. 178.

is deep significance in this fact. We do not come into the world fully developed. Man is born with a great many potentialities. God creates nothing perfect, but everything for perfection. There is a certain sense in which a man wins his body. When we look at a child lying helpless in its cot, we think what a long way it has to travel, so far as its bodily structure is concerned, before it can stand forth in the full strength of manhood. If that child were restrained from all exercise of its powers it would be helpless all its life. But as it puts forth its power it gains power, and the result is that at length it stands forth in the strength of manhood. It is precisely the same in regard to the mind. If any one were kept in absolute intellectual sluggishness, the mind would never be developed. Education depends not so much on putting knowledge into the child's mind as on drawing power forth from it by the exercise of power. Thus it may be said that a man may win his mind. And we can understand the same thing in regard to the bodily and mental power; but the time will come when the body and the mind have done their work, when the spiritual nature should receive its full development. And when this has been achieved, then a man may be said to have won his own soul.

¶ Every time we choose the hard right way rather than the easy wrong way we gain soul. Every time we sacrifice ease and comfort to do service to our fellows, we gain soul. Every time we say a kindly word and do a loving deed, we gain soul. When F. N. Charrington gave up a fortune to fight the drink, he gained soul. When Frank Crossley gave up comfort in Bowdon, and went and lived in Ancoats to minister to the poor, he gained soul. When Dr. Peter Fraser give up position and fame at home to go and be a missionary in the far-off Khassia hills, he gained soul. For the soul lives and grows and expands on love and kindness and sacrifice. Our heart is always enlarged when we run in the way of God's commandments.[1]

2. There may be a loss or shrinkage of soul. The heat and drought of worldliness cause the souls of men to shrink. Their very souls seem sometimes to become dry, hard, and small in selfishness. The process of soul-wasting and soul-shrinking is continually going on in the world. There was a man born apparently for large things. His mother's eye brightened as she looked down through

[1] J. D. Jones, *The Hope of the Gospel*, 103.

the years away into his golden prospects. His father's pride saw him climbing thrones of power. At thirty, at fifty, people who knew him when a boy, speak of what a man he might have been. Some sin at the root of the life has shrivelled the soul, which once began to grow. When a soul is dissipated before the body decays, when man's worldly interests destroy his capacity for truth and honour, chivalry and love, when sin exhausts his force as weeds do the soil, then a man is losing soul. Every departure from love and truth means shrinkage of soul; every trick, every falseness leaves a man so much less a living soul.

> Men have I seen, and seen with wonderment,
> Noble in form, "lift upward and divine,"
> In whom I yet must search, as in a mine,
> After that soul of theirs, by which they went
> Alive upon the earth. And I have bent
> Regard on many a woman, who gave sign
> God willed her beautiful, when He drew the line
> That shaped each float and fold of beauty's tent:
> Her soul, alas, chambered in pigmy space,
> Left the fair visage pitiful-inane—
> Poor signal only of a coming face
> When from the penetrale she filled the fane!—
> Possessed of Thee was every form of Thine,
> Thy very hair replete with the Divine.[1]

3. The winning of the soul is a continuous process. The religious life is the fulfilment of one's own nature in truest, largest ways. It is the unfolding of one's truest self, under the Fatherhood of God—the God who gives the life, sustains and nourishes it. It is the Divine within us responding to the Divine in God—reaching out and striving to measure itself up in beauty beside His perfect life. It is a spiritual energy welling up from within and realizing itself in all lovely thoughts and deeds, in purity of heart, high aspirings and service of mankind.

This conception of the religious life as developed from within is true to the now known laws of nature. Nothing in nature is superadded, put in from the outside; all is the result of the wonderful processes of fulfilment from within, the first germ of life gradually expressing itself in a million forms and beauties.

[1] George MacDonald, "Sonnets Concerning Jesus" (*Poetical Works*, i. 253).

¶ Growth is a vital as distinguished from a mechanical process; it partakes, therefore, of the mystery which envelops the essence of life wherever it appears; it is inexplicable and unsolvable. It cannot be understood and it cannot be imitated; it has the perennial interest and wonder of the miraculous. As we study it, the impression deepens within us that we are face to face with a method which not only transcends our understanding but from which our finest skill is differentiated, not only in degree, but in kind. Men have done wonderful things with thought, craft, and tools; but the manner of the unfolding of a wild flower is as great a mystery to-day as it was when science began to look, to compare, and to discover. Between the thing that grows and the thing that is made there is a gulf set which has never been crossed. Mechanism is marvellous, but growth is miraculous. From the seed to the fruit, from the egg to the perfected animal, from the primordial cell to the complete man, the process by which life evolves its potency and discloses its aims is the process of growth. No other method is known to nature, and the universality of this method, and the completeness with which, so far as we can see, life is limited to it, put it in importance on a level with the mysterious force to which it is bound in indissoluble union. Hence, next in importance to the fact of life, comes the method of life-growth, not by additions from without, but by evolution from within.[1]

4. The growth of the soul, though imperceptible, may be none the less real. Nature moves slowly, advancing by hair's-breadths, augmenting by the scruple. If we had lived on this earth from its very beginning until now, we should have thought it standing still, so tardy its action and minute the individual result; but if we recall the geological age when not a plant was on the earth, and then compare that barren epoch with the modern world blushing like a rainbow with ten thousand flowers, it is patent, after all, that the development of the planet has gone on unrestingly, however silently and deliberately. It is the same with the history of civilization. Had we lived through the long ages since man first appeared on the earth until now, we should have thought him ever standing still, so gradual and insignificant have been the successive changes and transformations of which he has been the subject; but compare the flint instruments, the rude vessels, and the grotesque decorations of a primitive kitchen-

[1] H. W. Mabie.

midden, with the splendid treasures of an International Exhibition, and the progress is as indisputable as it is glorious. So with the spiritual development of the race; we cannot mark the steps of its onward march; but the moral barbarism of the ages, by fine degrees which escape our eye, passes into the pure splendour of the millennial world. "What is to last for ever takes a long time to grow." And so it is also with the spiritual development of a man's life.

¶ Most men, when they grow old, are satisfied to be what they are. They have lived their lives, and wait quietly for the final summons. Their habits are too rigid to be easily changed, and they have no longer the force to make the attempt. Or they become indifferent, first about outward things, and then about themselves. Or they live in the past and think of what they have been, not of what they are, still less of what they may become. Or, if unsatisfied with themselves, they despair of improvement and sadly say, with Swift: "I am what I am." Jowett, as we know, thought very differently. To the last he wished to make the most of life, improving not others only, but himself. With him moral growth was a life-long process; the ideal was always before him, leading him upwards and onwards. Often weary, often in pain, conscious of failing powers in body and mind, through doubt and failure, he toiled on,

> still hoping, ever and anon,
> To reach, one eve, the better land.

"I wonder whether it is possible," he asks, in writing to a friend, "to grow a little better as one grows older. What do you say? I rather think so. Will you take the matter into consideration for you and for myself? People seem to me to have lost the secret of it, and to keep to the old routine, having taken in about as much religion or truth or benevolence as they are capable of. Against this I venture to set the homely doctrine, that we should be as good as we can, and find out for ourselves ways of being and doing good."[1]

> Thy hills are kneeling in the tardy spring,
> And wait, in supplication's gentleness,
> The certain resurrection that shall bring
> A robe of verdure for their nakedness.

[1] Abbot and Campbell, *Life and Letters of Benjamin Jowett*, ii. 352.

Thy perfumed valleys where the twilights dwell,
Thy fields within the sunlight's living coil,
Now promise, while the veins of nature swell,
Eternal recompense to human toil.
And when the sunset's final shades depart,
The aspiration to completed birth
Is sweet and silent; as the soft tears start,
We know how wanton and how little worth
Are all the passions of our bleeding heart
That vex the awful patience of the earth.[1]

II.

The Mastery of the Soul.

1. The first essential in the struggle to win our souls is self-mastery. We say that a man is self-possessed. What do we mean by that but that there resides in the man a power which holds all his faculties at command, and brings them into service in spite of all distractions? There can be no better phrase to express it. He possesses himself. He can do what he will with that side of the self which he chooses to use. Nothing takes away his courage. He has that in possession. Excitement and tumult do not take away the clearness of his mental vision. He keeps his eye on his theme. He has possession of his tongue. No confusion takes from him the power of lucid speech: and, above all, that deep-lying personality of the man is not thrown off its feet. It asserts itself. Men as they look and listen, perhaps as they rave, say, "The man is himself. He is not what our threats or our tumult or our opposition make him. We cannot take his manhood away from him. He has himself in hand. He is self-possessed."

¶ The figure which our Lord uses will perhaps be best understood through the physical analogy. Instances are common enough among us of those who have lost the mastery over some physical power. It may be a case of paralysis. It may be a species of atrophy. It may be the result of disease, or the result of neglect. But the power over the limb, let us say, for any effective service, has been lost. And we are so constituted in this marvellous physical organism that from the loss of one power the

[1] G. C. Lodge, *Poems and Dramas*, i. 76.

whole body suffers. Now, supposing it be possible by some treatment to recover the possession of the lost power: to reanimate the paralysed limb, renew, and as it were recreate, the decaying or decayed faculty, so that once again its full activity and use lies at the service of the will—this would be the winning of the physical organism. Well, that is not an idea which it is difficult to transfer to the spiritual nature. Who is there who has not known instances of an atrophied conscience? Who has not known, alas, men with a withered faith as real, if not so visible, as the withered hand of the man whose misery moved the compassion of Christ? Do you suppose any man would excite the pity of God for a withered hand, and none for a withered heart? Yet men who have thrown all their force into their intellect and allowed their affections to wither are a tragic reality. It is possible, as we know, not from prophet lips alone, but from our own experience, to lose the vision of God. More, it is possible to lose the power of vision. This it was that was in the thought of Christ, surely. Ye shall win your souls—recover your mastery over these God-given powers and faculties.[1]

Man is not God but hath God's end to serve,
A master to obey, a course to take,
Somewhat to cast off, somewhat to become.
Grant this, then man must pass from old to new,
From vain to real, from mistake to fact,
From what once seemed good, to what now proves best.
How could man have progression otherwise?[2]

¶ I shall have frequent occasion to refer to the letters of Jonathan Otley, a most true pioneer in geological science, and to avail myself of his work. But that work was chiefly crowned in the example he left—not of what is vulgarly praised as self-help (for every noble spirit's watchword is "God us ayde")—but of the rarest of moral virtues, self-possession. "In your patience, possess ye your souls."[3]

2. Self-possession comes by self-surrender. We never own ourselves till we have given up owning ourselves, and yielded ourselves to that Lord who gives us back saints to ourselves. Self-control is self-possession. We do not own ourselves as long as it is possible for any weakness in flesh, sense, or spirit to gain

[1] C. S. Horne, *The Soul's Awakening*, 257.
[2] R. Browning, *A Death in the Desert*.
[3] Ruskin, *Deucalion* (*Works*, xxvi. 294).

dominion over us and hinder us from doing what we know to be right. We are not our own masters, then. "While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the bondservants of corruption." It is only when we have the bit well into the jaws of the brutes, and the reins tight in our hands, so that a finger-touch can check or divert the course, that we are truly lords of the chariot in which we ride and of the animals that impel it.

The first thing to do is the thing which those men had already done to whom Jesus gave this promise that they should win their souls. What they had done—the first decisive step which they had taken in the work of finding their lives—was not, indeed, to acquaint themselves with all knowledge, or to peer into all mysteries. They had not even lingered at the doors of the school of the Rabbis. But when One who spake as never man spake, and who looked into men's souls with the light of a Divine Spirit in His eye, came walking upon the beach where they were mending their nets, and bade them leave all and follow Him, they heard the command as coming from the King of Truth, and at once they left all and followed Him. They counted not the cost; they obeyed, when they found themselves commanded by God in Christ.

¶ We are ever ready to think it was easy for those who saw Christ to follow Him. Could we read His sympathy and truthfulness in His face, could we hear His words addressed directly to ourselves, could we ask our own questions and have from Him personal guidance, we fancy faith would be easy. And no doubt there is a greater benediction pronounced on those who "have not seen, and yet have believed." Still the advantage is not wholly theirs who saw the Lord growing up among other boys, learning His trade with ordinary lads, clothed in the dress of a working man. The brothers of Jesus found it hard to believe. Besides, in giving the allegiance of the Spirit, and forming eternal alliance, it is well that the true affinities of our spirit be not disturbed by material and sensible appearances.[1]

3. When we have mastered our souls, we have won a victory which determines all minor issues. A great battle is raging. There is a fort which is the key to the whole position. Whichever side can win and hold that, is victor. Here, then, the general masses his troops. Other parts of the field are carried by

[1] Marcus Dods, *The Gospel of St. John*, 57.

the enemy. The outposts are driven in. The batteries are captured. Troops cannot be spared for these. Everything is concentrated upon that fort, and at last it is taken. The dead and dying lie in heaps round it, but the flag waves over. It has been taken at the sacrifice of minor positions, but these are of no account now. The enemy will abandon these of his own accord. He has nothing to gain by holding them any longer. They are commanded by the superior post; and, in the light of the fact that the general holds the point from which he can command the whole field and dictate terms, his former dealing with the inferior positions is explained and justified. He could afford to sacrifice them for the sake of holding the key to the field. The lesser thing was wisely given up for the greater. Well for us if we can carry that principle into our spiritual warfare. Well for us if we shall clearly recognize the soul as the key to the position. Well for us if we can wholly take in the meaning of the words, "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

¶ It happens that I have practically some connexion with schools for different classes of youth; and I receive many letters from parents respecting the education of their children. In the mass of these letters I am always struck by the precedence which the idea of a "position in life" takes above all other thoughts in the parents'—more especially in the mothers'—minds. "The education befitting such and such a station in life"—this is the phrase, this the object, always. They never seek, as far as I can make out, an education good in itself; even the conception of abstract rightness in training rarely seems reached by the writers. But, an education "which shall keep a good coat on my son's back;—which shall enable him to ring with confidence the visitors' bell at double-belled doors; which shall result ultimately in the establishment of a double-belled door to his own house;—in a word, which shall lead to advancement in life;—this we pray for on bent knees—and that is all we pray for." It never seems to occur to the parents that there may be an education which, in itself, is advancement in Life:—that any other than that may perhaps be advancement in Death; and that this essential education might be more easily got, or given, than they fancy, if they set about it in the right way; while it is for no price, and by no favour, to be got, if they set about it in the wrong.[1]

[1] Ruskin *Sesame and Lilies* (*Works*, xviii. 54).

III.

The Discipline of the Soul.

"In your patience."

1. There is need of patience. See what a fearful campaign is mapped out for these disciples of His. War and natural convulsion in the earth; the machinery of civil government arrayed against the faith; domestic affection changed to gall; kindred turned into persecutors; hatred from every quarter. But see the point on which Christ fixes the disciples' attention. It is not how all this persecution and sorrow are going to affect fortune and life and domestic relations. That needs no comment. It is not how the disciple is going to be able to break the force of these blows. He will not be able to break it. It may put an end to his life. But it is what the disciple is going to win and bring out of it all. Something is to be suffered. He does not conceal that; but something, and that the greatest thing, is to be won.

¶ In the prefatory note of Christina's "Face of the Deep" she once more mentions her sister [Maria] though not by name:—

"A dear saint—I speak under correction of the Judgment of the Great Day, yet think not then to have my word corrected—this dear person once pointed out to me Patience as our lesson in the Book of Revelation. Following the clue thus afforded me, I seek and hope to find Patience in this Book of awful import. Patience, at the least: and along with that grace whatever treasures beside God may vouchsafe me."[1]

2. We are all placed differently because of different temptations; but, whatever our position, we can win something out of the circumstances of our life. In the Epistle to the Romans it is said, "We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." Yet, the Apostle adds, "In all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." During life's battle we win that which will carry us into greater life beyond. So life may be looked on as a school where the young are trained. The exercises they are engaged in to-day they will never care for again, but meanwhile they are being shaped for the great world. These

[1] Mackenzie Bell, *Christina Rossetti*, 63.

books and exercises will be simply waste paper by-and-by, but the strength and vigour of mind they generate will be always valuable. Life, then, is a great school in which there are no holidays, in which a man is always being shaped and trained for a greater life on the other side. Let a man go forth to business to confront some great temptation, and let him, in his integrity, by God's grace stand firm and strong—that man will go to bed at night having gained soul.

¶ Astronomers tell us that one, at any rate, of the planets rolls on its orbit swathed in clouds and moisture. The world moves wrapped in a mist of tears. God alone knows them all, but each heart knows its own bitterness, and responds to the words, "Ye have need of patience."[1]

3. The patience here spoken of is not merely submission, but active persistence, constancy. It is not enough that we shall stand and bear the pelting of the pitiless storm, unmurmuring and unbowed by it; we are bound to go on our course, bearing up and steering right onwards. Persistent perseverance in the path that is marked out for us is especially the virtue that our Lord here enjoins. It is well to sit still unmurmuring; it is better to march on undaunted and unswerving. And when we are able to keep straight on the path which is marked out for us, and especially on the path that leads us to God, notwithstanding all opposing voices, and all inward hindrances and reluctances; when we are able to go to our tasks of whatever sort they be, and to do them, though our hearts are beating like sledge-hammers; when we say to ourselves, "It does not matter a bit whether I am sad or glad, fresh or wearied, helped or hindered by circumstances, this one thing I do," then we have come to understand and to practise the grace that our Master here enjoins.

¶ Wherever the flowers of the North are distributed they prevail; they establish themselves in all climates, driving out the native flowers. On the other hand, the flowers of the South cannot establish themselves here. The explanation is that what the northern blooms have endured has made them robust and victorious. The Christian religion is one of endurance. This was first and pre-eminently true of our Lord. The first ages of the Church were ages of martyrdom. Ever since then the Christian

[1] A. Maclaren.

faith has borne the weight of opposition and trial. As the glacial period has made the flowers hardy, so the discipline of suffering has made the Church of Christ the very home of patience, power, heroism. In this power of patience we win our souls—we realize ourselves, save ourselves everlastingly.[1]

¶ When the Duke of Wellington saw a painting of Waterloo which represented him sitting on horseback with a watch in his hand anxiously scanning the hour, the great soldier ridiculed the picture, declared the posture false, and told the artist to paint the watch out. No battle is won with a watch in our palm. The victory over our own nature and the victory that overcometh the world are gained in patient faith and endeavour.

4. Christ manifested the patience that He recommended. The patience of our Lord is remarkable. Isaiah prophesied of Him: "He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law." Nothing is more wonderful than the serenity of our Lord in the prosecution of His great mission. His zeal was a flaming fire, and His desire to see of the travail of His soul in the establishment of His kingdom of universal righteousness and peace was intense, with an intensity into which we cannot enter; but the calmness with which He carried out His purpose was that of the measured and majestic movements of nature. He was never flurried or betrayed into the agitation of hurry; but, whilst kindling with sublime and mighty enthusiasm, He proceeded to fulfil His destiny without haste and without pause.

¶ He who waited so long for the formation of a piece of old red sandstone will surely wait with much long-suffering for the perfecting of a human spirit.[2]

Grant us, O Lord, that patience and that faith:
Faith's patience imperturbable in Thee,
Hope's patience till the long-drawn shadows flee,
Love's patience unresentful of all scathe.
Verily we need patience breath by breath;
Patience while faith holds up her glass to see,
While hope toils yoked in fear's copartnery,
And love goes softly on the way to death.

[1] W. L. Watkinson, *The Gates of Dawn*, 103.
[2] *Letters of Thomas Erskine of Linlathen*, ii. 242.

How gracious and how perfecting a grace
Must patience be on which those others wait:
Faith with suspended rapture in her face,
Hope pale and careful hand in hand with fear,
Love—ah, good love who would not antedate
God's will, but saith, Good is it to be here.[1]

[1] Christina G. Rossetti.

In Remembrance.

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In Remembrance.

This do in remembrance of me.—Luke xxii. 19.

1. There are many ways in which we may think of the Holy Communion. For it is many-sided and rich in meaning. There are at least five aspects in which it may be profitably regarded.

(1) *It is a command.*—It is something that we are bidden to do. "This do." We obey our Lord's explicit command in meeting and celebrating the Holy Communion, by partaking of bread and wine together in memory of Him. There can be no sort of doubt that He did command His disciples to do this; and they have obeyed His command from the very beginning down to the present day. Whatever are its benefits, whatever other purpose it serves, it is an act of obedience, and as such it makes appeal to us.

(2) *It is a commemoration.*—We do this "in remembrance" of Christ. This is the aspect of the Holy Communion most strongly and prominently brought out in the Prayer-Book. It is the Lord's Supper; this is its first title. We remind ourselves in the consecration prayer that our Lord "instituted, and in His holy gospel commanded us to continue *a perpetual memory* of His precious death." When the bread is given to each one, he is bidden to take and eat *in remembrance* that Christ died for him. When the wine is given he is bidden to drink this *in remembrance* that Christ's blood was shed for him. And as a commemoration it keeps ever before us the life and death of our Lord, it reminds us of His teaching, of His words, of His example, of His work for us.

(3) *It is a thanksgiving.*—This is expressed in the name Eucharist, which means thanksgiving. Our Lord in instituting this Sacrament began by giving thanks. "He took bread, and when he had given thanks, he brake it." So from the very

beginning we read that they brake bread, and "did take their food with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God." By the very earliest writers outside the New Testament, if not in the New Testament itself, this service is called "the Thanksgiving," the Eucharist.

(4) *It is a fellowship.*—This is implied in the very name Holy Communion. It ought to be to us a constant reminder that our Christian life is an association, not an isolated life; that some day the whole world shall be bound together with one heart and one mind, and jealousies, rivalries and competitions shall utterly cease. Every Christian congregation, and most of all its communicants, pledge themselves to strive to realize this temper, crushing out all the little quarrels and huffs and coldnesses and alienations that so often mar the peace of a congregation, merging minor differences of opinion in the grand unity of love and worship of Christ.

(5) *There is also another fellowship.*—"We have," says St. John, "a fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." This fellowship or communion with God through Jesus Christ is by no means limited to the Holy Communion. Over and over again it is spoken of independently of that rite. The communion with God through Christ Jesus is having the same mind in us which was also in Christ Jesus. He is the Vine, and we are the branches; He is the Head, and we are the members. When we are called to be Christians, we are called into the fellowship of Christ; we are incorporated into Him. This union with God through Christ is a spiritual state, the slowly won result of prayer and self-denial, and of the love and following of Christ. But it is equally plainly taught that this fellowship with God is specially realized in the Holy Communion.

¶ I do believe that you have partly misunderstood the meaning of the Holy Communion. Certainly it should be, it must come to be, the most intimate act of love between man and God; but it has also, surely, two other aspects at least for which one should cling to it through years even of uncertainty. First, it is offered to us as the vehicle of a spiritual Presence coming to work in us and for us, bound by no laws save those of Spirit, and so able to act as mysteriously as love (which indeed it is). It is not merely laid upon us as a duty, but let down to us as a hope; in it God meets us while we are yet a great way off, and teaches and changes

us in ways we do not stop to notice and could not, perhaps, understand. And, secondly, it is the great means whereby we all realize our unity and fellowship one with another, in which we try to put aside for a little while our own special needs and difficulties and peculiarities, and throw ourselves into the wide stream of life with which the world is moving towards God. For these two uses I would cling, I believe, to the Eucharist, by God's grace, through the loss of almost all else, even though mists and doubts were thick about me.[1]

2. It is the second of these five ways of regarding the Supper that we are to consider at present. The Holy Communion is a commemoration. It is done "in remembrance."

¶ The desire to be remembered after death is almost universal in human nature. There may be some who can say—

> Thus let me live unseen, unknown,
> Thus unlamented let me die;
> Steal from the world, and not a stone
> Tell where I lie.

Or like Howard, who said, "place a sun dial on my grave, and let me be forgotten." But nearly all men have the wish to live, after they are gone, in the thoughts and memories of others. They would fain have some kindly remembrances of themselves in some human bosoms, would fain know that those they leave behind think of them and remember them with some regret and esteem. There are few who

> To dumb Forgetfulness a prey,
> This pleasing anxious being e'er resigned,
> Left the warm precincts of the cheerful day,
> Nor cast one longing, lingering look behind.
> On some fond breast the parting soul relies,
> Some pious drops the closing eye requires,
> Ev'n from the tomb the voice of Nature cries.[2]

¶ In being conscious of the greatness of His act He differed, says Carlyle, from all other men in the world. "How true also, once more, it is that no man or Nation of men, *conscious* of doing a great thing, was ever, in that thing, doing other than a small one! O Champ-de-Mars Federation, with three hundred

[1] Bishop Paget, in *Life* by S. Paget and J. M. Crum, 66.
[2] R. Stephen, *Divine and Human Influence*, ii. 65.

drummers, twelve hundred wind-musicians, and artillery planted on height after height to boom the tidings of the revolution all over France, in few minutes! Could no Atheist-Naigeon contrive to discern, eighteen centuries off, those Thirteen most poor mean-dressed men, at frugal Supper, in a mean Jewish dwelling, with no symbol but hearts god-initiated into the 'Divine depth of Sorrow,' and a 'Do this in remembrance of me';—and so cease that small difficult crowing of his, if he were not doomed to it?"[1]

Let us remember Him (1) for what He has been, (2) for what He has done, and (3) for what He is.

I.

For what He has Been.

1. First of all, and in its simplest aspect, His memory is the memory of One who lived, among men, a human life like their own, and yet a life such as none else had ever lived before, or has ever lived since. Of that life the Sacrament is a memorial. It is a memorial of One who, at a time when the world was full of darkness and unrest, came into it saying that He came from God, and had a message from God for all whose hearts were weary, whose minds were dark, whose souls were full of doubts and fears; One who seemed to prove, by the very nature of His life, that what He said of Himself was true, for it was a life which shed a brightness and gladness around it, as from a light shining in a dark place. The little children came gladly to His side. The humble household brightened as He came, and bestirred itself to give Him heartiest welcome. Sickness and disease disappeared at His gracious presence; the blind eyes were opened to behold Him; the deaf ears were unstopped, so that their first sound of human speech should be His kindly words. Even the dead arose at His command, and re-entered the homes that they had left lonely, and went out and in among those whom their loss had made desolate and afflicted. His life was one that gladdened other lives, and bore about with it one living message of peace on earth and goodwill towards men.

When you recall the memory of the dead, it is their life you

[1] Carlyle, *French Revolution*, ii. bk. i. ch. ix.

chiefly recall—all they were, how they looked and worked, what they said, and what they did, and what they were, all the incidents connected with them during the years you were together, the happy times you had in each other's company, the sweet intercourse you enjoyed, the bright scenes and seasons of communion and pleasure, or the sad sorrowful times of suffering in your histories, all your hours of joy, or your hours of sadness and sorrow, all they did for you, all their ministries of thoughtfulness and kindness for your comfort and happiness, all that made them helpful to you, all that made them dear to you, all their gentleness and sweetness and tenderness, all their love, all their affection, all about them that made them lovable and beloved, and endeared and bound them to your heart.

Thus marvellous has been the power and influence of the memory of His life over men and the world. Down through eighteen hundred years, it has been the loftiest inspiration, and the greatest hope and comfort for human souls. The world has been made wiser and better and richer and nobler by it, for it has enlightened it, and reformed its laws and its institutions and its manners. Men and women have been made holier and purer by it, for it has exerted a transforming power over their whole natures. The inner life it has cleansed, and the outward it has adorned. It has entered into and purified men's hearts and feelings and desires and thoughts and tempers and dispositions. It has put down pride and vanity, and envy and jealousy, expelled impurity, and made untruth ashamed. It has cast out evil, and enthroned beauty and goodness in the soul, and made harsh and rugged and unseemly natures sweet and lovely with gentleness and meekness and patience and kindness and charity. It has sweetened enjoyments and brightened and given a new zest to pleasures. It has sanctified and glorified common work and duties. It has given patience and fortitude to endure persecutions and sufferings and martyrdom and death in all its awful forms. It has cheered men amidst struggles, and upheld them in difficulties and depressions. It has soothed in pain and sickness and weakness, and in agony of body and mind. It has sustained and calmed human nature in the bitterest and most heartrending sorrows. It has consoled amid disappointments and failures and baffled hopes, and given relief amid racking cares and anxieties.

It has brightened the terrible separations of death with the hope and promise of immortality. In all the worst anguish of life it has been the power, and the only one, to save from despair; and in the last struggles of death it has taken out death's sting, given solace and calmness and hope and peace, and made the night of mortality radiant with the splendours of redeeming love.

2. It is not simply that Christ is about to die and desires to be remembered. He has a great Messianic purpose in saying "This do in remembrance of me." The law of the Passover had run, "This day shall be unto you for a memorial"; and our Lord simply puts Himself or His death in the place of the Passover and bids His followers remember Him. The confidence with which He does so is nothing short of majestic, Divine. In the popular mind He is a failure. His enemies consider that they have defeated Him and extinguished His pretensions and His hopes. His best friends are nervous and trembling with forebodings. In His own mind alone is there a clear perception of the actual state of matters; in Him alone is there neither misgiving nor hesitation. Far from hiding from His followers the ignominious end that awaits Him, He speaks of it freely. He knows they will in a few hours be scattered. He tells them so; and yet, so far from apologizing for leading them into difficult and discreditable circumstances, so far from bidding them forgive and forget Him, He actually bids them set aside the event which was most memorable to them as Jews, and remember Him instead. His death is to be more to them than their emancipation from slavery in Egypt. By their connexion with Him they were to have so complete and all-sufficing a life that they, prouder of their nationality than any other people, might forget they were Jews. The Passover had done its work and served its purpose, and now it was to give place and make way for the celebration of the real deliverance of the race. Picture Him standing there on the eve of His death, knowing that His influence on the world in all time to come depended on His being remembered by these half-enlightened, incompetent, timorous men, and you see that nothing short of a Divine confidence could have enabled Him to put aside the very core and symbol of the Jewish religion and present Himself as the hope of the world.

When I muse upon the Blest
Who have left me for their rest,
When the solitary heart
Weeps within itself apart,
When all thoughts and longings fail
E'en to touch the dark thin veil
Hanging motionless to screen
That fair place we have not seen;
Then I bless the Friend who left,
For the traveller bereft,
First, the Promise to His own,
"Thou shalt be where I am gone;
Thou, when I return to reign,
Shalt be brought with me again";
Then, the sacramental Seal
Of their present, endless weal;
Of Himself, the living Bond
'Twixt us here and them beyond;
And of all the joys that burn
Round the hope of His Return:
'Tis the Feast of Heaven and Home—
"Do ye this, until He come."[1]

3. But the memory of Christ is the memory of more than His beautiful and gracious human life. It is the memory of One who through that life revealed God; of One, who said, "I do not stand before you alone, and speak to you by My own wisdom merely. One is with Me—one whom you know not—even God, God whom you must know, whom you must love, through knowledge and love of whom your souls must live; and whom, that you may know Him, I have come to reveal to you, and that you may love Him, I have come to reveal to you as your Father who loves you, who forgives all your trespasses, who calls you into fellowship with Himself." His memory is the memory of One who brought these glad tidings to men. They are glad tidings, in the knowledge of which we have been so trained, within the sound of which we have so habitually lived, that we cannot understand their fresh full life for those to whom they were a new revelation.

¶ We live and move amid the glory and beauty of God's fair world—in the clear air of heaven and the bright shining of the sun on high, and we never think of the priceless blessings of the

[1] H. C. G. Moule, *In the House of the Pilgrimage*, 64.

blowing wind and the joyous sunshine, or of the loss that would be ours were we to be shut up from these in silence and darkness. But bring out the captive from the dungeon, where the air is thick and the light pale, and set him on the mountain's brow, and he is unconscious almost of all else, save the glory and freedom of the wind and light. And so, could we whom use has hardened but transport ourselves for one hour from the society of men whose life, whether they will or not, is moulded by the principles of the revelation of Christ—from the atmosphere of a Christian land, from the knowledge of all Christian truth, from the offices of all Christian charity, from the neighbourhood of all Christian law, and custom, and culture—to a land where the name of Christ has never been heard, where the principles of His Church have never had even the feeblest recognition, where the Christian idea of God is utterly unknown, we should be able, in some sort, to realize the sense of light and liberty and confidence which must have filled the hearts of those who, waking from "the foul dream of heathen night," or quitting the oppressive rites and ordinances of the Jewish Law, came into the presence of the Messenger of God, who said, "God is your Father. He is in Me, and I am in Him. You see Him revealed in Me. He loves you with an everlasting love. Believe this, and your soul shall live."[1]

4. How then are we to keep alive the remembrance of Christ? There is only one way that is entirely worthy, and that is to illustrate the noble spirit of the Sacrament in loving service. The best way to honour the memory of those we love is to live lives which they would approve. We are to interpret to the world the sacrifice of Christ by giving ourselves for others in some such way as He gave Himself for us. We best honour the memory of our dead soldiers by making the noblest use of the heritage which they purchased with their blood. Our praise would be hollow if we were false to our country and made merchandise of liberty and patriotism. We best honour the memory of Christ by exemplifying His spirit in our daily conduct.

¶ Our Master was most human in the Upper Room, and with His last wish suggests irresistibly a mother's farewell. She does not remind her children that she has done all things for them at sore cost, for this was her joy. Nor does she make demands of hard service now any more than in the past. But one thing the mother hungereth and thirsteth for, and desireth not with words only but with her eyes as she looketh round on those she can no

[1] R. H. Story, *Creed and Conduct*, 114.

longer serve, but will ever love. "Do not forget me"—how few and short the words, how full and strong are they written out at large. "Live as I would wish, believe as I have believed; meet me where I go."[1]

When I forget Thee, like a sun-parched land
Which neither rain nor dew from heaven hath wet,
So my soul withers, and I understand
Wherefore Thou gavest me this high command
Not to forget.

When I forget the death which is my life,
How weak I am! how full of fear and fret!
How my heart wavers in a constant strife
With mists and clouds that gather round me rife,
When I forget!

Ah, how can I forget? And yet my heart
By dull oblivious thought is hard beset,
Bred in the street, the meadow, or the mart:
Yet Thou my strength and life and glory art,
Though I forget.

I will remember all Thy Love divine;
Oh meet Thou with me where Thy saints are met,
Revive me with the holy bread and wine,
And may my love, O God, lay hold on Thine,
And ne'er forget.

And not to-day alone, but evermore
Oh let me feel the burden of the debt—
The load of sorrow that the Master bore,
The load of goodness that He keeps in store,
And not forget![2]

II.

For what He has Done.

The memory of Christ is the memory of One who closed His perfect life by the sacrifice of Himself; who sealed His testimony with His blood. It is indeed this, more than aught else, that the

[1] John Watson, *The Upper Room*, 78.
[2] Walter C. Smith, *Poetical Works*, 494.

symbols which we use in this Sacrament bring home to us. It is to this that the words Christ uttered at His last supper chiefly point. "This," said He, "is my body which is given for you. This is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." A death for us, a body wounded, blood poured forth—this is what we are especially reminded of here. "Why was that body wounded? Why was that blood shed?" Does any one ask? He who asks will find plenty of excellent doctrines to give him abundant answer: but what appears always as the living centre of truth within all doctrine, and far above all, is the simple fact that that death *was* endured, that that sacrifice *was* offered; the simple fact that He who lived the perfect life and brought to us the saving message of a Father's love knew that it was needful for our salvation that He should bow His head and die; knew that, without that death, sin in us could not be conquered, and death for us could not be overcome, and that therefore out of His true love to us He was content to die, that we through Him might live, that we, believing in His love and truth and seeing these to be stronger than even death itself, might thereby be rescued from the love and power of our sins, and might be reconciled to the Father, of whose love the Son's self-sacrifice was the Divine expression.

¶ It happened once that a family had a father who was a benefactor to the State and did such service that after his death a statue was erected in a public place to his memory, and on the pedestal his virtues were engraven that all might read his name and revere his memory. His children mingled with the people as they stood in that square and listened to their father's praise with pride. But their eyes were dry. This figure with civic robes, cut in stone, was not the man they knew and loved. Within the home were other memorials more intimate, more dear, more living—a portrait, a packet of letters, a Bible. As the family looked on such sacred possessions, they remembered him who had laboured for them, had trained them from first years, had counselled, comforted, protected them. All he had done for the big world was as nothing to what he had done for his own. When they gathered round the hearth he built, on certain occasions they spoke of him with gentler voices, with softened eyes while the strangers pass on the street. This Father is Jesus, and we are His children whom He has loved unto death.[1]

[1] John Watson, *The Upper Room*, 84.

1. We commemorate His *death.*—He gives us as a remembrance of Him that which inevitably recalls Him as He died. It is His body broken, His blood poured out, that He sets before us. He does not give us a picture of Himself as He is now and as John saw Him in vision. He does not appeal to our imagination by setting before us symbols of unearthly majesty. He desires to be remembered as He was upon earth and in the hour of His deepest humiliation. And it is obvious why He does so. It is because in His death His nearness to us and His actual involvement in our life and in all our matters is most distinctly seen. It is because that is His most characteristic action; the action in which He uttered most of Himself, all that was deepest in Him and all that it most concerned men to know. And as we prize that portrait of a friend which brings out the best points in his character, even though it is old and he has changed much since it was taken, so do all the friends and followers of Christ think of Him as He was in His death. They believe He is alive now, and that now He is clothed with such manifest dignity and beauty as must attract boundless regard and admiration; but yet it is to the humble, self-sacrificing, bleeding Christ their thoughts persistently turn. It is there they find most to humble, most to encourage, most to win, most to purify, most to bind them to their Lord.

¶ Those who have seen the Russian Pilgrims at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem have been impressed with the fervour with which they kiss the marble slab of anointing and other sacred objects connected with the Cross and Passion of our Saviour. So also in the shrines and churches at Moscow hundreds of peasants and ordinary business people can be seen at all hours of the day turning in to kneel for a few minutes and kiss some icon or picture of our Lord.[1]

2. We commemorate His death as *the supreme act of His whole work of salvation.*—The Supper is the symbol of Christ giving up His life for us not only as the highest expression of self-sacrificing love, but in a far deeper sense as the ground upon which our sins can be forgiven and the Divine life imparted to the soul. Christ's suffering for us differs from our suffering for one another by the whole diameter of human experience. No

[1] F. S. Webster.

amount or degree of mere human suffering can atone for sin. Christ's suffering was unique in that it was redemptive. Like ours it was an example, but unlike ours it was a dynamic. Christ did not die for the world to show His love for it in the dramatic and useless way that Portia stabbed herself to show her love for Brutus; Christ died to save the world as none other ever did or could. We cannot fathom the depth of the mystery of Christ's death for sin, but this we know, that by it our sins are forgiven and we are brought into oneness with God.

¶ What was Christ's death? It was a willing surrender of Himself into the hands of the Father, knowing at the same time that it was the Father's pleasure to bruise Him. It was a willing pouring out of all the hopes of the flesh founded on the idea of the continuance of present things; it was an acknowledgment of the righteousness of the judgment of sorrow and death, which, on account of transgression, God had laid on the flesh of which He had become a partaker. And at the same time, while it was a surrender of Himself in filial confidence into His Father's hands, it was also in full assurance that He was to be gloriously rewarded, by being raised triumphantly from the dead as the New Head and Fountain of life to the Race, by taking hold of whom every child of Adam might be saved.[1]

Only to be as the dust that His wounded feet trod,
Only to know and to hear
His love, like the deep-throbbing pulse in the bosom of God,
Slaying my sorrow and fear!

Lord, I remember the sins and the shadows, and yet
I remember the light of Thy face.
Let me but die at Thy feet, and the black trembling horror forget,
And only remember Thy grace—

Forgetting the darkness that walked with me all the way,
The shadow that froze me to see,
Only remembering the joy of the breaking of day
When my soul found Thee.[2]

3. We remember Him for what He has done in *bringing us home to God*.—In the Sacrament there is a meeting between God

[1] *Letters of Thomas Erskine of Linlathen*, i. 250.
[2] L. Maclean Watt, *The Communion Table*, 16.

and the soul, and the soul is taught to find its satisfaction in God. It is taught to look out of itself, beyond itself, for all that can change, and bless, and exalt, and ennoble it, and give it happiness. It is not taught to depend upon its own feelings, its earnestness of faith, its power of hope, its strength of love, or even its utter abnegation of self. It is not left to imagine that it can raise itself from its fallen state, and effect its own union with God. No, it is presented as in a state of hunger in this mysterious feast, craving for God, longing for the powers that are in God to be exercised upon it, and depending upon God's own act to unite Himself to the soul. And the soul knows that this union is possible, that it can be made one with God through God the Son having been made man, and having died, and risen, through the working of His life in itself. The faith of the communicant may be expressed in one single sentence, "Christ in me, the hope of glory."

¶ Jesus, in Browning's beautiful phrase, "calls the glory from the grey"; from the heart of death itself He plucks the promise of life abounding. They shall come to see that His Body has been given "for them," that His Blood has been the seal of a new friendship formed between them and their Father in heaven. In that holy feast they shall eat the one, and drink the other. Faith in Him will never die, while they do that.[1]

¶ "He that dwelleth in me and I in him, eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood," that is, becomes Christ Himself, is a faithful repetition of His life and spirit in another and individual personality, is so transformed into His spiritual image that he can say with St. Paul, "It is not I that live, but Christ that liveth in me." This is no mysterious, magical statement, but one in deep accordance with the experience of the human heart. No one who has loved another, or lost one he loved, who has felt the profound intertransference that passion makes, but will understand and value it. It gives a real force, a natural meaning to St. Paul's words, "the communion of the body of Christ." The observance of the Lord's Supper does not make that communion. It is the form among many others in which the idea of that communion is most visibly enshrined. But in enshrining that idea it enshrines another and a higher one—communion with God.[2]

[1] H. L. Goudge, *The Holy Eucharist*, 14.
[2] Stopford A. Brooke, *Sunshine and Shadow*, 214.

III.

For what He Is.

1. The mode of remembrance appointed by our Lord reminds us that it is to the same kind of personal connexion with Him as the first disciples enjoyed that we are invited. We have the same symbol of our connexion with Him as they had. We are no more remote from His love, no more out of reach of His influence. All that He was to them He can be to us, and means to be to us. Our outward circumstances are very different from theirs, but the inward significance of Christ's work and His power to save remain as they were.

As, when our Blessed Lord made Mary Magdalene feel and know that He was really present with her, she poured out her whole heart in the burning fervour of that acknowledgment, "Rabboni."—my Master, my Lord, my All—so by our every act and word we try to express to the Blessed Jesus what He is to us. Our whole soul fastens on Him. Our spirit has no eye for any one, or anything else. Our gaze is fixed on Him. He is with us, and we are with Him. We know what He is in Himself, how pure, how fair, how holy, how perfect. We know what He has been to us, how loving, how tender, how compassionate, how full of healing, and pardon, and peace. And so every hymn is full of His praises; and every gesture is an act of loving reverence to Him; and every sacred rite speaks of Him. We are in His court, and under His eye, and there is an interchange of love between Him and us. On our side there is the love of reverence. On His side there is the love of a gentle, fostering, soothing protection.

¶ Above all, it was necessary for a right understanding, not only of Dr. Arnold's religious opinions, but of his whole character to enter into the peculiar feeling of love and adoration which he entertained towards our Lord Jesus Christ—peculiar in the distinctness and intensity which, as it characterized almost all his common impressions, so in this case gave additional strength and meaning to those feelings with which he regarded not only His work of Redemption but Himself, as a living Friend and Master. "In that unknown world in which our thoughts become instantly lost," it was (as he says in his third volume of sermons) his real

support and delight to remember that "still there is one object on which our thoughts and imaginations may fasten, no less than our affections; that amidst the light, dark from excess of brilliance, which surrounds the throne of God, we may yet discern the gracious form of the Son of Man."[1]

2. Again, He bids us "Do this," to remind us that we must daily renew our connexion with Him. He desires to be remembered under the symbol of food, of that which we must continually take by our own appetite, choice, and acceptance. We do not gather at the Lord's Table to look at a crown, the symbol of a king who governs by delegates and laws and a crowd of officials, and with whom we have no direct connexion. We do not assemble to view the portrait of a father, who gave us life, but of whom we are now independent. We do not come to garland a tomb which contains the mortal part of one who was dear to us and who once saved our life. But we come to renew our connexion with One who seeks to enter into the closest relations with us, to win our love, to purify our nature, to influence our will. It is by maintaining this connexion with Him that we maintain spiritual life; by taking Him as truly into our spirit by our affections, by our choice, and by our faith as we take bread into our body.

Soon, all too soon, from this blest Sacrament
Back to the glare of day our feet are bent;
Soon wakes the week-day sun, and brings along
The cares and clamours of our human throng;
The world's loud laughter, threats, or whisper'd spells,
Life's battles, burthens, weeping, songs, and knells.
But we who from that Paschal Chamber come
Still in its shadows find our quiet home,
Safe in its precincts, near our Master's heart,
'Midst all the stress of travel, school, and mart.
And still that Cross goes with us on our way;
We feast on that great Sacrifice all day.
The sealing Symbol comes but then and there;
The Truth is ever ours, and everywhere;
Faith needs but stretch her hand and lift her eyes,
And ready still for use her Banquet always lies.[2]

[1] A. P. Stanley, *Life and Correspondence of Thomas Arnold*, i. 32.
[2] H. C. G. Moule, *In the House of the Pilgrimage*, 68.

3. And the Holy Supper had its heavenly counterpart. The Jews were wont to picture the felicity of the Kingdom of Heaven under the image of a glad feast. "This world," said the Rabbi Jacob, "is like a vestibule before the world to come: prepare thyself in the vestibule that thou mayest be admitted into the festal chamber." And it is written: "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God." "Many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven." "Blessed are they which are bidden to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And the feast of the Passover was a foreshadowing of that heavenly banquet. It commemorated the exodus from the land of bondage, but it was more than a commemoration. It was a prophecy, and when the worshippers sat at the holy table, they thought not merely of the ancient deliverance but of the final home-gathering.

¶ It is an ancient and abiding thought that the visible world is the shadow of the invisible, and everything which it contains has its eternal counterpart. This thought runs all through the Holy Scriptures. It finds its highest expression in the teaching of our Blessed Lord. In His eyes earth was a symbol of Heaven. He pointed to human fatherhood and said: See there an image of the Fatherhood of God. "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" And each familiar thing—the lamp, the net, the seed, the flowers, the birds, the wandering sheep—served Him as a parable.

> For, nowise else,
> Taught He the people; since a light is set
> Safest in lanterns; and the things of earth
> Are copies of the things in Heaven, more close,
> More clear, more intricately linked,
> More subtly than men guess. Mysterious,—
> Finger on lip,—whispering to wistful ears,—
> Nature doth shadow Spirit.[1]

¶ From Mentone, where he spent the first winter of his illness, Dr. Robertson wrote to his congregation at home:—

"By the time this may be read to you, your Spring Communion will be over. Again, from the hands of the officiating elders, or rather, as I trust, from Christ's own pierced hand, you will have

[1] D. Smith, *The Feast of the Covenant*, 177.

received the symbols of His sacrifice, and said, as you received Himself afresh into your hearts, 'This we do in remembrance of Thee.' Again, the Great High Priest, King of Righteousness, and therefore also King of Peace, has brought down the bread and wine from the altar of His atonement to feed you, returning, weary from the battle, but I trust victorious over the evil; and in the strength of that meat may you go onward, conquering the evil, and battling for the right, and good and true, so as at last to have an entrance administered to you abundantly into the Kingdom, as part of the victorious 'Sacramental host of God's Elect.'"[1]

[1] A. Guthrie, *Robertson of Irvine*, 287.

Sifted as Wheat.

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Sifted as Wheat.

Simon, Simon, behold, Satan asked to have you, that he might sift you as wheat: but I made supplication for thee, that thy faith fail not: and do thou, when once thou hast turned again, stablish thy brethren.—Luke xxii. 31, 32.

1. Our Lord has just been speaking words of large and cordial praise of the steadfastness with which His friends had continued with Him in His temptations, and it is the very contrast between that continuance and the prevision of the cowardly desertion of the Apostle that occasioned the abrupt transition to this solemn appeal to him, which indicates how the forecast pained Christ's heart. He does not let the foresight of Peter's desertion chill His praise of Peter's past faithfulness as one of the Twelve. He does not let the remembrance of Peter's faithfulness modify His rebuke for Peter's intended and future desertion. He speaks to him, with significant and emphatic reiteration of the old name of Simon that suggests weakness, unsanctified and unhelped: "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan asked to have you, that he might sift you as wheat."

2. The imagery of the passage is borrowed from the Old Testament. There was a day, says the author of the Book of Job, when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them. Like them, he has his petition. He has cast a malignant eye, in his going to and fro in the earth, upon the prosperity and the integrity of one righteous man. He is well assured that the two things are one. The integrity is bound up in the prosperity. God has made a hedge about him, so that no evil comes nigh his dwelling. Let his prosperity be touched, and the integrity will go with it. He desires to have him. And God says, Behold, he is in thine hand. Such is the figure. He is to be tried. He is to be tempted. Satan begs him of God, that he may sift him as wheat.

¶ Now, about a week or fortnight after this, I was much followed by this Scripture, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you." And sometimes it would sound so loud within me, yea, and as it were call so strongly after me, that once above all the rest, I turned my head over my shoulder, thinking verily that some man had, behind me, called me: being at a great distance, methought he called so loud. It came, as I have thought since, to have stirred me up to prayer and to watchfulness; it came to acquaint me that a cloud and storm was coming down upon me; but I understood it not.[1]

The Lord's words, addressed specially to Simon, give to the whole circle of the disciples an indication of—

I. Danger.
II. Defence.
III. Duty.

I.

Danger.

"Behold, Satan asked to have you, that he might sift you as wheat."

1. All the disciples were in danger. The Saviour here forewarns the whole band of Apostles that Satan had asked to have them, that he might sift them as wheat. Hitherto he had only been permitted to sift them with a gentle agitation. Now he sought permission to shake them violently, as wheat is shaken in the sieve; to toss them to and fro with sharp and sudden temptations; to distract their minds with dismal forebodings and apprehensions, in the hope that they would be induced to let go their fast hold of Faith, and take refuge in utter and irretrievable defection. Our Lord states this plainly, because it was important for them to know the full extent of their danger, in order that they might be on their guard. He does not tell them so plainly how far Satan's assault upon them would be attended with success. His disclosure stops short just where it would appear to be most interesting to His hearers. And this is generally the case with the Divine communications. Vain man would always like to be told more than it is good for him to know. But God draws the line, not with reference to our curiosity, but with reference to His

[1] Bunyan, *Grace Abounding.*

own gracious purposes for our well-being. The Saviour warns His disciples of their danger, to induce them to watch and pray. If He had told them more—if He had revealed to them all that was to happen within the next twenty-four hours—they would have considered their fate as sealed, and would have given way to utter despair. But, while withholding this information, He told them something else which, instead of harming, was calculated to encourage and help them. Having excited their fears, by telling them what their adversary purposed against them, He threw into the opposite scale the cheering intelligence of what He would do and had already done for them. He told them, that He had chosen one of them, whom He would take under His special protection—not for the sake of that individual alone, but in order that his preservation might be the means of saving them all.

Satan desires us, great and small,
As wheat to sift us, and we all
Are tempted;
Not one, however rich or great,
Is by his station or estate
Exempted.

No house so safely guarded is
But he, by some device of his,
Can enter;
No heart hath armour so complete
But he can pierce with arrows fleet
Its centre.

For all at last the cock will crow,
Who hear the warning voice, but go
Unheeding,
Till thrice and more they have denied
The Man of Sorrows, crucified
And bleeding.

One look of that pale suffering face
Will make us feel the deep disgrace
Of weakness;
We shall be sifted till the strength
Of self-conceit be changed at length
To meekness.

Wounds of the soul, though healed, will ache;
The reddening scars remain, and make
Confession;
Lost innocence returns no more;
We are not what we were before
Transgression.

But noble souls, through dust and heat,
Rise from disaster and defeat
The stronger,
And conscious still of the divine
Within them, lie on earth supine
No longer.[1]

(1) The devil has not only sought them; he has obtained them, that he may sift them as wheat. The words are even stronger than the Authorized Version renders them; it is not only "Satan hath desired," but "Satan hath obtained his desire." We might even translate them, "Satan hath got hold of you." And the pronoun is plural; it was not only Peter, but all the twelve, that Satan had desired, and had for a space obtained. The one who was always the ready spokesman for the rest, and who, through his impetuous rashness, was to thrust himself into the fire of temptation, was to give the most flagrant proof of Satan's possession, in that he would deny with cursings his Master and his discipleship; but all were to be overtaken and to be found wanting, in that they would forsake their Lord in His dire extremity, and would leave Him in the hands of His foes. Satan had desired and had gained them all.

Twice in the New Testament this figure of sifting or winnowing is brought before us, and, strange to say, the sifter or winnower in the one case is our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and in the second case the wicked tempter. St. John the Baptist, when speaking of the coming Messiah, says, "Whose fan is in his hand, and he will throughly purge his floor," etc. And here we have that very Messiah speaking of the devil sifting even His Apostles. By "sifting" is meant testing, shaking those to whom the process is applied in such a way that part will fall through and part will remain.

H. W. Longfellow, *The Sifting of Peter.*

¶ The sifting of wheat is a most hard and thorough, but a most necessary, process. The wheat, as it has grown, has become associated with the protecting chaff, which it is necessary should be blown away, and with the foreign substances taken from the earth and from the air, which must be separated. Before the wheat is ready for use it must be sifted or winnowed; no pains must be spared to make the process as thorough as possible. Only an enemy to the wheat, or a disbeliever in its true powers, would desire to spare it such an ordeal. As it falls, after such a process, solid and clean, into the receptacle which has been prepared for it, its value is greatly enhanced. There is now no doubt about its true nature and the work to which it should be put. It carries out all the points of the analogy to notice that Peter is not promised that he shall be saved from the sifting process; no hand is put forth to hold him securely sheltered; no cloud wraps him away from danger. Peter is too valuable to be thus treated. If he is wheat, he must be sifted.

¶ When Christ at a symbolic moment was establishing His great society, He chose for its corner-stone neither the brilliant Paul nor the mystic John, but a shuffler, a snob, a coward—in a word, a man. And upon this rock He has built His Church, and the gates of Hell have not prevailed against it. All the empires and the kingdoms have failed because of this inherent and continual weakness, that they were founded by strong men and upon strong men. But this one thing—the historic Christian Church—was founded upon a weak man, and for that reason it is indestructible. For no chain is stronger than its weakest link.[1]

(2) The devil will do his best to scatter the wheat, and keep the chaff. Throughout the ages the Spirit of Evil reveals a cynical distrust of goodness. Between the time of ancient Job and the self-confident Peter, the Spirit of Evil had not changed in character or method. Now he has asked to have Simon that he may sift him, sure that his character is unsound, and that all his professions are chaff. His failure with a hundred Jobs meantime has not given him any confidence in goodness. Evil never can believe in good. Still is this Satan hurrying to and fro throughout the earth, peering into every keyhole of character to find baseness there, sneaking into every corner of the soul to catch it in its depravity. Years after this sifting of Simon, in which the Spirit of Evil repeated the work upon Job, to whom he came as

[1] G. K. Chesterton, *Heretics*.

he said, "from hurrying to and fro in the earth," the sifted Peter speaks of Satan, in his first letter (v. 8) as the "peripatetic, a wandering, roaring lion, intent on finding prey." That is the history of evil, and in nothing has it a surer manifestation than in its scepticism concerning goodness.

¶ Milton, in his most masterly manner, has delineated the sneering diabolism of distrust in that "archangel ruined." Evil begins its infernal career in its utter lack of faith in goodness; and its Satanic spirit is most manifest when virtue appears to have a blackened heart, righteousness to have been insincere, and truth to be only a concealed falsehood. Here is the very profession of evil.

> But of this be sure,
> To do aught good never will be our task,
> But ever to do ill our sole delight,
> As being the contrary to His high will
> Whom we resist. If then His providence
> Out of our evil seek to bring forth good,
> Our labour must be to pervert that end,
> And out of good still to find means of evil;
> Which oft times may succeed, so as perhaps
> Shall grieve Him.[1]

¶ Watts painted his Miltonic Satan with the face averted from the light of the Creator with whom he talked. For title, these words were used: "And the Lord said unto Satan, whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the Lord and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it." The Satan the painter conceived is a mighty power ruling over the evils which were unconnected with sin.[2]

2. The disciples had brought the peril upon themselves. They gave, as it were, an invitation to Satan to come into their company. They had evidently not paid any great regard to Christ's teachings concerning love and humility. The evil spirit of envy and ambition which they had harboured among themselves was the scent which attracted Satan to that particular upper room. These men, by their angry strife or calculating worldliness, lit, as it were, a beacon which brought the Spirit of Evil to the battle. If these Apostles had had more of the spirit of true prayer, if their

[1] Milton, *Paradise Lost*, i. 158.
[2] M. S. Watts, *George Frederic Watts*, i. 97.

spirits had been more humble, if their hearts had been more guileless, and their characters attuned by discipline to the teachings of the Lord, the devil would never have been attracted to that upper room, his eye had never shone with triumph at their bickerings, nor had they stood in such danger of an awful overthrow.

There was in Peter in particular one great defect—a large amount of self-confidence, which made him quick at speaking and acting; and self-confidence in the New Testament is always treated in one way, as that which shuts out confidence in God. It is the enemy of faith. Faith is insight, and self-confidence is a blinding influence. Again and again there is pressed upon us the necessity of a lowly estimate of self; "Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted"; God who dwells "in the high and holy place," dwells also with him who is of a humble spirit. If God was to dwell in Peter, if the Divine was really to take up His abode in him and rule him, if the impulsive and vehement strength of the man was to be made a steadfast and certain fire, and to be hallowed by the Divine indwelling, so that he might lead the Apostles during those critical times which were coming, then clearly his self-confidence must be purged out of him, he must be sifted as wheat, the grain must be separated from the chaff.

But the others were not less guilty than Peter. It is not the case that he, who should have been a pattern to the rest, proved the weakest of all, and the first to fly. When the chief priests came with a band of soldiers to take Jesus, Peter was the only one of the Apostles who made even a show of resistance. Peter and one other were the only two who followed Jesus into the palace of the High Priest. Peter's failure, when it did happen, was owing to a train of circumstances from which his brethren, by their more hasty and precipitous failure, were exempt. Satan on his first sifting, shook out all the other Apostles; but it required a stronger temptation, a more violent agitation of the sieve, to unfix the faith of Peter. And as Peter was the last to fall, he was also the first to rise and put together again the fragments of his shattered faith. From that hour he was an altered man. He added to his zeal, steadfastness; he exchanged his confident boasting for humility and dependence upon God. In this blessed recovery, do we not plainly see the influence of Divine grace?

Are we not reminded immediately of the Saviour's words—"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan asked to have you, that he might sift you as wheat; but I made supplication for thee, that thy faith fail not."

¶ My feelings being easily excited to good as well as bad, I am apt to mistake an excited state of the feelings for a holy state of the heart; and so sure am I of the deception that, when in an excited state regarding eternal things, I tremble, knowing it is the symptom of a fall, and that I must be more earnest in prayer. Self-confidence is my ruin.[1]

3. Peter and the others were unconscious of peril. There they recline, rising now and then to emphasize their angry words. Their minds are occupied only with thoughts of place and power in some fancied coming kingdom. The strife grows keen, and all forgetful of their Master's loving words, humility is banished from the room, and self-assertiveness speaks loud with its imperious voice. All unconscious of the tempter's presence, these men dispute among themselves, and it was not till afterwards that Peter was informed by Christ that the devil's eye had been intently set on him, and that, whilst he had been claiming to be greatest, Satan had almost claimed him for his own.

¶ When it was once said to him, "I would fain know what the devil is like in shape and character," Doctor Martin said, "If you would see the true image and form of the devil, and what his character is, give good heed to all the commandments of God, one after another, and represent to yourself a suspicious, shameful, lying, despairing, abandoned, godless, calumnious man, whose mind and thoughts are all set on opposing God in every possible way, and working woe and harm to men." The devil seeks high things; looks to that which is great and high; scorns what is lowly. But the eternal, merciful God, reverses this, and looks on what is lowly. "I look on him who is poor and of a broken heart." But what is lifted up, He lets go; for it is an abomination to Him.[2]

4. But the power of Satan is strictly limited. God reigns though Satan sifts. The powers of evil are in God's holy hands. Evil is not altogether its own master, and cannot therefore be the

[1] Norman Macleod, in *Memoir*, i. 129.
[2] Luther, *Table-talk* (ed. Förstemann), i. 140.

master of the world. "Over all" is now "God blest forever!" "And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thine hand, only spare his life." So God permitted Job's trial and stood behind the demoniac forces which racked the sufferer, restraining and checking them. Then look at this case. "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan asked to have you, that he might sift you as wheat; but I made supplication for thee, that thy faith fail not; and do thou, when once thou hast turned again, stablish thy brethren." So said his Master when the incarnate God permitted Simon's trial. So He has always intimated that He "stands within the shadow keeping watch above his own."

¶ Alas! we live in the kingdom of the devil *ab extra*; therefore we cannot hear or see any good *ab extra*. But we live in the blessed kingdom of Christ *ab intra*. There we see, though as in a glass darkly, the exceeding, unutterable riches of the grace and glory of God. Therefore, in the name of the Lord let us break through, press forward, and fight our way through praise and blame, through evil report and good report, through hatred and love, until we come into the blessed kingdom of our dear Father, which Christ the Lord has prepared for us before the beginning of the world. There only shall we find joy. Amen.[1]

¶ It is a strange thing that so fine a spirit as Satan is let loose to do so much mischief, but he is only "the prince of the power of the air," not of the power of the spirit. I believe there may be more devils than men. They are legion, and go in companies, so far as we can gather from the hints of Scripture. I think each temptation that assails a man may be from a separate devil. And they are not far off; probably our atmosphere was the place of their original banishment. And there they live—air-princes. But mark, they have no power over the innermost spirit; nay, they can have no knowledge of the secrets of the heart of man. No single heart-secret is known to any single devil. These are known only to the Searcher of the hearts, who is also their Maker. Some good Christians disquiet themselves by forgetting this. I would say that our adversary can look and hear, see and listen, and make inferences. He has only a phenomenal knowledge, and that not perfect. He is but a creature, and cannot know the secrets of the universe. It ought to comfort all men that only our Maker knows our constitution.[2]

[1] Luther, *Letters*, v. 684.
[2] John Duncan, *Colloquia Peripatetica*, 181.

II.

Defence.

"But I made supplication for thee, that thy faith fail not."

1. Our Lord anticipates the devil. His intercession precedes the tempter's attack. He presents Himself as the Antagonist, the confident and victorious Antagonist, of whatsoever mysterious, malignant might may lie beyond the confines of sense, and He says, "My prayer puts the hook in leviathan's nose, and the malevolent desire to sift, in order that not the chaff but the wheat may disappear, comes all to nothing by the side of My prayer."

¶ "Intercession," it has been said, is "the divinest gift of friendship." Somebody may be thinking of a child far away upon the frontiers of the Empire. Ah! severance is the penalty of Empire, and what a pain it is—what a deep wound—in a parent's heart! You have not seen that absent child for many a year. You almost dread meeting him again, lest you should not recognize him or he you. He writes to you not quite so frequently or intimately as he used to write; absence and distances soon or late chill the warmest hearts, and you and he are moving slowly apart, like ships bound for different ports on the infinite deep. What can you do for him? One thing only,—you can pray. Prayer is the wireless spiritual telegraphy transcending time and space. You are near him, if ever, in your prayers.

Or your child may be drifting into sin. He has gone like the prodigal into the far country. He has not yet like the prodigal "come to himself." He has ceased to visit you, even to answer your letters. He is dead—all but dead to you—while he lives. Oh! it is only prayer that, if God will, may help you to help him. Some day perhaps he will arise and come to his father; and you will welcome him; and the past will be no more. It will be the answer to your prayer. "I have made supplication for thee," said the Saviour, "that thy faith fail not."[1]

2. The prayer of our Lord was personal. It was a particular supplication for Peter. The precise terms in which Jesus prayed for Peter we do not know; for the prayer on behalf of the one disciple has not, like that for the whole eleven, been recorded.

[1] J. E. C. Welldon, *The School of Faith*, 100.

But the drift of these special intercessions is plain, from the account given of them by Jesus to Peter. The Master had prayed that His disciple's faith might not fail. He had not prayed that he might be exempt from Satan's sifting process, or even kept from falling; for He knew that a fall was necessary, to show the self-confident disciple his own weakness. He had prayed that Peter's fall might not be ruinous; that his grievous sin might be followed by godly sorrow, not by hardening of heart, or, as in the case of the traitor, by the sorrow of the world, which worketh death: the remorse of a guilty conscience, which, like the furies, drives the sinner headlong to damnation.

¶ In the first parish where I laboured lived a man who was not only agnostic in his attitude towards things religious, but even derided them, and was wont to chaff his wife on her devotion to her church. The wife, however, went on her quiet but earnest way, living out her religion in the home. One morning very early the husband awoke and discovered his wife beside his bed absorbed in whispered prayer. Her pale, upturned face was fixed with intensity upon the Invisible, and her warm hand was resting upon his own, she supposing him to be asleep. As the husband's eyes opened on the unexpected scene, the suggestion came like a flash to his soul, "My wife's God is more real to her than her husband is. If she is so earnest for my welfare as to rise at such an hour and pray alone for me, it is time I had some care for my own soul"; and he instantly arose from his bed, knelt beside her and added his own prayer to hers. He gave his heart to God on the spot, and that very morning came to the early meeting at the church and announced his change of heart; the next Sabbath he united with the church. The conviction of reality in the wife's intimacy with God was what roused and brought him; the wife had something to impart, which of itself wrought to open the husband's soul.[1]

(1) Peter needed special prayer because of the pre-eminent position that he occupied. Those who play the hero on great occasions will at other times act very unworthily. Many men conceal and belie their convictions at the dinner-table, who would boldly proclaim their sentiments from the pulpit or the platform. Standing in the place where Christ's servants are expected to speak the truth, they draw their swords bravely in defence of their Lord; but mixing in society on equal terms, they too often

[1] H. C. Mabie, *Method in Soul-Winning*, 20.

say in effect, "I know not the man." Peter's offence, therefore, if grave, is certainly not uncommon. It is committed virtually, if not formally, by multitudes who are utterly incapable of public deliberate treason against truth and God. The erring disciple was much more singular in his repentance than in his sin. Of all who in mere acts of weakness virtually deny Christ, how few, like him, go out and weep bitterly!

(2) There was something in the temperament of Peter that called for special intercession. Of all the disciples who were to be sifted, or brought under temptation, it was to Peter alone that Christ's heart went out in urgent entreaty. But why for Peter rather than for the others? Why should the merciful feelings of His heart be concentrated on him? Was it because he was nearer and dearer, and more amiable than the others; more equable in disposition, more exemplary and mild? No, for he was the reverse of this. Peter's eminence among the disciples at this time was not of this kind. He was hot-headed, rash, and egotistical, unstable and inconsistent. At one moment he was brave as a lion, heroic in all his impulses, and tense in all his purposes; the next he was timid, vacillating, and cowardly. You see him at one moment sword in hand, foremost to defend his Master; the next he stands by the fire in the court-yard stamping and swearing, denying with oaths that he knew any such man as Jesus. But why should Christ pray for such a man? one is naturally led to inquire. Why did His love go out so warmly and tenderly towards one capable of so much treachery and falsehood, one so selfish and unreliable? Why select him from the other disciples, and lavish upon him so much tender solicitude and prayer?

(3) Judas needed special intercession as well as Peter, but he put himself beyond the reach of grace. Judas sins and falls to his utter ruin: Peter falls and is restored. What accounts for this difference? Is it entirely because Christ prayed for the one disciple and never prayed for the other? None of us, surely, would say that it is. We are compelled to look at the matter in the light of their character. Judas is cool, crafty, calculating, selfish; Peter at heart loves that which is holy and just and true, and hates that which is wrong and vile. He may fall into sin by his rashness, but he hates it when once he sees it; and he knows how to repent and seek forgiveness and restoration. His heart is

tender and true. His tears of penitence are genuine. He is such an one as may be prayed for. There is material in him to work upon. The life of the soul is not extinct. The Divine breath will fan it into a flame again.

He weeps, and bitter are his tears,
As bitter as his words were base,
As urgent as the sudden fears
Which even love refused to face.

O, love so false and yet so true,
O, love so eager yet so weak,
In these sad waters born anew
Thy tongue shall yet in triumph speak.

Thou livest, and the boaster dies,
Dies with the night that wrought his shame;
Thou livest, and these tears baptize—
Simon, now Peter is thy name.

A rock, upon Himself the Rock
Christ places thee this awful day;
Him waves assault with direful shock,
And cover thee with maddening spray.

But safe art thou, for strong is He:
Eternal Love all love will keep:
The sweet shall as the bitter be;
Thou shalt rejoice as thou dost weep.[1]

3. Our Lord did not ask for Peter that he might be exempted from temptation, but simply that his faith should not fail. Faith meant everything to Peter. It was the foundation on which all that was good and noble in his character was built up. And the trial went to strengthen his faith. Peter's vanity was sifted out of him, his self-confidence was sifted out of him, his rash presumption was sifted out of him, his impulsive readiness to blurt out the first thought that came into his head was sifted out of him, and so his unreliableness and changeableness were largely sifted out of him, and he became what Christ said he had in him the makings of being—"Cephas"—"a rock," or, as the Apostle Paul, who was never unwilling to praise the others, said, a man

[1] T. T. Lynch, *The Rivulet*, 132.

"who looked like a pillar." He "strengthened his brethren," and to many generations the story of the Apostle who denied the Lord he loved has ministered comfort.

4. In Peter's case, good came out of evil. The sifting time formed a turning-point in his spiritual history: the sifting process had for its result a second conversion, more thorough than the first—a turning from sin, not merely in general, but in detail: from besetting sins, in better informed if not more fervent repentance, and with a purpose of new obedience, less self-reliant, but just on that account more reliable. A child hitherto—a child of God indeed, yet only a child—Peter became a man strong in grace, and fit to bear the burden of the weak.

¶ The bone that is broken is stronger, they tell us, at the point of junction, when it heals and grows again, than it ever was before. And it may well be that a faith that has made experience of falling and restoration has learned a depth of self-distrust, a firmness of confidence in Christ, a warmth of grateful love which it would never otherwise have experienced.[1]

III.

Duty.

"Do thou, when once thou hast turned again, stablish thy brethren."

Our Lord's meaning was that a new power of personal helpfulness was to come to Peter through his sad experience, which he should use in strengthening others to meet temptation. Then, when he had passed through that terrible night, when he had been lifted up again, when he had crept back to the feet of his risen Lord and had been forgiven and reinstated, he had double cause for gratitude—that he himself had been saved from hopeless wreck and restored, and, still more, that he was now a better man, prepared, in a higher sense than before, to be an apostle and a patient, helpful friend to others in similar trial.

1. Peter had now the qualifications for strengthening the brethren. He has known by experience the unforgetting, rescuing love of the Christ—the grace of God. O, what a reality it comes

[1] A. Maclaren.

to be when a man has lost the chaff of himself and feels that he himself is freer to be and to grow! Pentecost rings yet with the eloquence of that once broken heart of Peter. Hope in Christ? What a certainty did it have to him! His first letter is called "the epistle of hope"; God has always been making hopefulness in this way. Jacob the supplanter had been made Israel—Prince of God; and now Peter was sifted out of Simon—sifted out with an experience which made him a ceaseless strengthener of men.

When Peter sank into the depths, his self-confidence was broken. At the moment of his lowest fall, while oaths were on his lips, "the Lord turned and looked upon Peter." There was an expression in the Master's face which made that look the turning-point in Peter's life. He did not speak. There are times when words are not wanted—times, perhaps, when real feeling cannot speak. Christ simply looked at Peter—a look which told of real sorrow and real love, and had in it something of the reproach that a great love, when deeply wounded, must feel. It was enough. It brought to Peter's mind all that had been so piteously forgotten; it brought back the real Peter; and "he went out and wept bitterly." They were tears, I doubt not, terrible to witness—the tears of a strong man in deep agony; of a man broken down by remorse, a man who must shun his fellows, and creep away anywhere out of everybody's sight, that no one may remind him of his shame. So he went for those three days, we know not whither, into solitude, till John found him and brought him to the tomb on Easter morning; but in those silent hours the work was done. His mind went back over the old story. He came to himself. The past lived again, as it does in such moments. How often he had been betrayed by his self-confident temper; how again and again it had led him into sin and shame; how long before he had boldly cast himself into the lake, only to fail, at the critical moment, in showing any real faith. And so he would be brought to feel that which marks a real stage in a man's development—when he pieces his life together, and sees that his weakness and error had early roots—that he had not to mourn a single faithlessness out of harmony with his real self, but that his denial was but the crowning catastrophe of a long story of self-confidence which was always poisoning his good, and plunging him deeper into sin and shame.

2. Peter took up the task laid upon him and justified to the full his Master's confidence. He was a tower of strength to the Church, and warned all against the machinations of the Evil One, "who, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." Indeed, Peter's fall, so far from damaging the cause of Christianity, was to be made an instrument for promoting its success. How strange! When a number of men are joined together in carrying on an enterprise of this sort, any weakness or wavering on the part of their leader is commonly fatal to the whole undertaking. Here the very contrary was to happen. Peter's fall was to be the means of his brethren's recovery from their worse fall. Such is God's way of working in things spiritual. A pious man who has been betrayed into a great fall cannot recover himself in such a manner as to place himself only in the same situation as before he fell. He will be more earnest, more zealous, more watchful over himself, more anxious for the honour of God, than ever before. He will feel a desire, especially if his offence has been public and notorious, to make amends, humanly speaking, for the scandal he has brought upon religion. And not only is he disposed to promote the glory of God by stablishing or strengthening his brethren; he is also more qualified to do so. He has learnt another lesson, in addition to his former experience, of the deceitfulness of man's heart and the deceits of man's ghostly enemy. So it was with Peter. He did not rest satisfied with strengthening and entrenching his own position; he made it the great object of his life and labours to warn, to admonish, to exhort, and to stablish his brethren. We can see the evidence of this in his speeches, as recorded in the Book of Acts; we can see it also in his two Epistles, which we may regard as his legacy to the Church, his testamentary reparation for the scandal of his fall.

¶ It was remarked by an old minister whom William Peebles used to hear, that the devil is just the believer's fencing-master; for by trials and temptations he teaches him how to fight himself.[1]

¶ From the time of which I speak the whole character, current and outlook of my life changed. The Scriptures lighted up, Christian joy displaced depression, passion for souls ensued, courage triumphed over fear in public religious exercises. Other people also recognized the realness of the change, and the whole

[1] A. Philip, *The Evangel in Gowrie*, 265.

providential course of life since has corroborated the divineness of the vision of that night. About that time the college was broken up through the occurrence of a case of smallpox among the students, and I went home. Calling on my pastor the next morning, and reporting the great change which had occurred in me, with quick sympathy he replied, "The Lord has sent you home in this frame just at the time when we most need you. The state of religion is low among us: the young people's meeting has died out: you are the means to revive it." Then taking a note-book and pencil he wrote down the names of about two hundred young people in the town, and putting it in my hands said, "There, go and bring them in. Lead them to Christ. That's your work." Encouraged by such a proposal, I set about it. The first visit I made was characterized by a soul-contest of hours resulting in the conversion of a young woman. That led to another and that to others until an entire Bible class of influential young persons surrendered to Christ. From that the work so spread that ere the summer was over nearly all the persons named in my note-book were converted and added to the several churches of the town.[1]

3. One more turning there was to be in Peter's life. He was in Rome—so the story runs—in the Neronian persecution. His faith failed. He fled from the city. But at the gate of the city he met the sacred form of his Master. He said to Him, *Domine, quo vadis?*—"Lord, whither goest thou?" And the Lord made answer, "I go to Rome, to be crucified." St. Peter understood the words. He, too, turned back. He entered the city again. He was martyred there. That was his last, his supreme conversion. And by it he "strengthened his brethren."

O Jesu, gone so far apart
Only my heart can follow Thee,
That look which pierced St. Peter's heart
Turn now on me.

Thou who dost search me thro' and thro'
And mark the crooked ways I went,
Look on me, Lord, and make me too
Thy penitent.[2]

[1] H. C. Mabie, *Method in Soul-Winning*, 16. [2] Christina G. Rossetti.

An Open Bible and a Burning Heart.

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An Open Bible and a Burning Heart.

And they said one to another, Was not our heart burning within us, while he spake to us in the way, while he opened to us the scriptures?—Luke xxiv. 32.

1. What a day of surprises it was, that marvellous first Easter Day! Early in the morning, before the sun had risen, the little group of broken-hearted women, Mary Magdalene, Salome, and Mary, mother of James, issuing from the gates, and through the darkness bearing spices for the body in the tomb, and finding that the body was no longer there! Malice could it portend? or what? Straightway the message carried to Peter and to John, their hurried visit to the sepulchre, and corroboration of the strange report; the linen cloths still lying in their place, the napkin—which had bound the head—still lying in its folds, separately, on the stone pillow, where the head had lain, but the body gone, withdrawn from the embrace of death! And they go back to their own home. Next, the solitary return of Mary Magdalene, and that first appearance of the Risen Lord, with its strange utterance, "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended." And then again that fuller manifestation to the disciples who journeyed to Emmaus, from which we draw our text.

Throughout the Resurrection records it is always the unexpected that happens. They are no work of human fancy. Who would have invented a first appearance to Mary Magdalene, and a second to these unknown disciples, of whom one only, Cleopas, is so much as named, while both alike have no other place in the Gospel history? Their home was within walking distance of Jerusalem, upon the road that led seawards towards Joppa. Emmaus lay some seven miles or more upon the route from Jerusalem. They had been of those who had gone up to the great Passover, full of hopeful, strange presentiments. They had

shared the expectation that Jesus, in whom they believed, "a prophet mighty in deed and word," whom they took to be the Christ, might at the feast manifest Himself. "We hoped that it was he which should redeem Israel." And on them too had fallen the crushing disenchantment, the overthrow of all their hopes, the arrest, the crucifixion, and the death. They had seen Him numbered with the malefactors; they had perhaps helped to carry Him to the grave; and upon this miserable morning, sick at heart with grief and disappointment, they were gathered with the disciples plunged in speechless gloom of bereavement and spiritual despair. At least we know that, when tidings reached them of an empty tomb and of a vision of angels, it did not even keep them in Jerusalem. It did not kindle any gleam of hope. They thought of it, drearily, as one more unkindness to the dead. The festival was over; they must go their ways; and, with perhaps the customary prayer of parting in the Temple precincts, they took the homeward way.

It was noon, or later, as they passed out of the city gates, through the hot Syrian sun, and, like other groups of wayfarers, took the high road north-westward. Alone together, as friends will, they opened their hearts; "they communed with each other of all these things which had happened." Sometimes they walked, talking rapidly, aloud, with the vehemence of Eastern men; and then again "they stood still, looking sad." How graphic it all is! And may we not read in it an allegory of actual life? It is in the communings of friends, two and two, that not seldom Jesus Christ, perhaps at the time unrecognized, draws near. So absorbed were they in their own thoughts and griefs that they hardly noticed the stranger who overtook them and became a silent sharer in their conversation. It is the same Jesus who in the gospel narrative seems always so unmistakably Himself. "O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe," He said, with His own accent of wondering, expostulating love. And yet "their eyes were holden that they should not know him." How was it? We can only guess by interrogating our own hearts. What is it, as we go wayfaring through life, that holds our eyes, so that sometimes we perceive the voice of Jesus, and then at other times, though He is close and speaking audibly, and in the very way we might have expected, we do not know or recognize?

Lord Christ, if Thou art with us and these eyes
Are holden, while we sadly go and say
"We hoped it had been He, and now to-day
Is the third day, and hope within us dies,"
Bear with us, O our Master—Thou art wise
And knowest our foolishness; we do not pray
"Declare Thyself, since weary grows the way,
And faith's new burden hard upon us lies";
Nay, choose Thy time, but ah|! whoe'er Thou art,
Leave us not; where have we heard any voice
Like Thine? our hearts burn in us as we go;
Stay with us; break our bread; so, for our part
Ere darkness falls haply we may rejoice,
Haply when day has been far spent may know.[1]

2. They were out of heart. They had so built on hope, they had so trusted it was He that should redeem Israel, they had looked for a national deliverance, for the proclamation of a king. And all had failed, irreparably, as it seemed, and on their hearts there lay the "sense of void, of hopes not satisfied, of promises withdrawn." When we are cast down, when some spiritual expectation fails us, when that from which we had hoped most for ourselves or for others whom we care for turns out a failure, and only convinces us of weakness and of helplessness, it is hard to believe that Christ is even then and there preparing a revelation of Himself. Yet just when we are despondent and low-hearted, and once and again going over the grounds on which we built our hopes, and asking, Where was my mistake, why has He failed me so? even then, it may be, Christ is Himself near to make it plain.

¶ We have all our times of perplexity and sorrow. I do not mean those who naturally take a pessimistic view of life, and whose outlook is usually dashed in with colours of sepia, but Christians generally, both as members of a corporate body and in their own personal experience. There are few who have not been conscious of "an hour of darkness," a season in which they have a peculiar sense of spiritual loneliness and desertion, and which is followed by distressing doubts and troubles—similar to those which the two disciples felt on their way to Emmaus; similar, for of course they cannot be the same; their future is our past, and we are fully assured of the fact of Christ's Resurrection, no less than of His life and death; but we may be like them in the bitter

[1] Edward Dowden.

recollection of our desertion of Him, the uncertainty of His forgiveness, and apprehension lest He should hide His face for ever. If this be so, let us not escape from our sadness by letting our religion slip away from us or by plunging into the cares and pleasures of life. Rather let us meditate on all the Saviour has done and suffered for us, and the gracious promises He has made to us, and be assured, though we seem to be solitary, He is never really far from us. He can read our thoughts and note our sadness, but if we go on quietly, under the light of His presence, all doubt and anxiety will pass away.[1]

¶ When Robert Louis Stevenson visited the leper settlement at Molokai in 1889 he had as fellow passengers in the boat nursing sisters going to work on the island. "And when I found that one of them was crying, poor soul, quietly under her veil, I cried a little myself. I thought it was a sin and a shame that she should feel unhappy. I turned round to her and said something like this: 'Ladies, God Himself is here to give you welcome.'"[2]

¶ How like my Master it was, to go after those two sorrowing ones on the very day of His triumphant resurrection! He thought it worth while to walk seven miles, and spend two hours in the work of comforting two obscure, lowly, dejected disciples. He seems never to have spoken, as the Risen One, to any but sorrowing disciples. And He spoke only comfort; nothing else. Never a word about their sin; never a word of reproof; only words of good cheer, unfolding His own glory, and their glory in following Him. Living Himself in the joy of victory, He only wished them to be sharers in that joy.[3]

He is not far away:
Why do we sometimes seem to be alone,
And miss the hands outstretched to meet our own?
He is the same to-day,
As when of old He dwelt
In human form with His disciples—when
He knew the needs of all His fellow-men,
And all their sorrows felt.
Only our faith is dim,
So that our eyes are holden, and we go
All day, and until dusk, before we know
That we have walked with Him.[4]

[1] M. Fuller, *In Terrâ Pax*, 59.
[2] *Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, ii. 154.
[3] G. H. Knight, *The Master's Questions to His Disciples*, 329.
[4] E. H. Divall, *A Believer's Rest*, 89.

3. He comforted them by opening to them the Scriptures. By a single word He might have revealed Himself, as when to that early watcher at the sepulchre He said "Mary," and she cast herself at His feet; or, as He came at evening into the midst of the disciples, saying "Peace be unto you," and showing them His hands and His side. But He chose to deal with them in a different and peculiar way, giving them at first no means of personal recognition, but leading them to a gradual discovery of His true spiritual glory through enlightening in the truth, not showing them so much what was, but what they would have known must have been, if they had understood the Scriptures which they professed to believe. He who spoke to them seemed a chance-met stranger, their eyes were holden that they should not know Him; but as word after word of ancient inspiration came glowing from His lips, and prophet after prophet passed before them, a long procession of witnesses to that kingly glory of Christ which was to be reached through sufferings, which but through sufferings never could be reached, it was as if a mist had passed from their eyes—all things were beheld in a new light, and through the veil of His earthly lowliness as they remembered it, could they discern not only the light of the indwelling glory, but in the very crisis of His self-abasement, and sorrow, and weakness as He hung, desolate and forsaken, on the cross, as He cried, "It is finished," and gave up the ghost, as He was borne in the touching helplessness of death to the grave and left there—in all this they could see that which was essential to the consummation of His redeeming work. That lowest, darkest step of all was the necessary initial step to His manifest exaltation.

¶ Jesus Christ is not only the Interpretation, He is the Interpreter of the Scriptures, for the Scriptures contain the various efforts of men in different ages and differing degrees of religious development to find God, and Jesus Christ is the solution of this supreme problem of the human spirit. We find in Him to-day the fulfilment of the law and the prophets: we find in Him the explanation of human history; we find in Him the key to all the tragedies of human suffering and shame and sorrow. He is our interpretation of life and death, grief and joy, success and failure. In His light, life grows to us more reasonable, and its mystery more clear. He gives purpose to its least intelligible

events, and reveals a meaning in its darkest catastrophes. But what I am asking you to believe is something much more than this. All this might conceivably be granted by men to whom such a knowledge would bring only a certain degree of mental satisfaction. Even if they found in the history of Christ's life and work an explanation of the various enigmas that human life presents, they would not necessarily be quickened to a strong and eager spiritual life, nor experience any special personal blessedness. Still the deep fountains of truth and life might be closed to them. For the quickening of the spiritual energies comes from the contact of a living spirit with our own; and the Scriptures become living books to us, helpful, stimulating, inspiring, when they cease to have only an historical interest, and, in the hands of a Living Teacher and Interpreter, become alive with new thought and power for the salvation and inspiration of the men and women of to-day.[1]

Slowly along the rugged pathway walked
Two sadden'd wayfarers, bent on one quest;
With them another, who had asked to share
Their travel since they left the city walls;
Their converse too intent for speed; and oft,
Where linger'd on the rocks the sunset tints,
They check'd their footsteps, careless of the hour
And waning light and heavy falling dews.
For from the Stranger's lips came words that burn'd
And lit the altar fuel on their hearts
Consuming fear, and quickening faith at once.
God's oracles grew luminous as He spoke,
And all along the ages good from ill
And light from darkness sprang as day from night.

We, too,
Are weary travellers on life's rough path.
And Thou art still unchangeably the same.
Come, Lord, to us, and let us walk with Thee:
Come and unfold the words of heavenly life,
Till our souls burn within us, and the day
Breaks, and the Day-star rises in our hearts.
Yea, Lord, abide with us, rending the veil
Which hides Thee from the loving eye of faith,
Dwell with us to the world's end evermore,
Until Thou callest us to dwell with Thee.[2]

[1] C. S. Horne. [2] E. H. Bickersteth.

4. Now it is not suggested that Christ taught these disciples something new about the Scripture. What He gave them was a new interpretation of the old. These travellers were no strangers to the Scripture. They were Jews, and had read deeply in every book of it. When they were little children in their village homes, they had clambered round their father's knee on Sabbaths, and had listened to the stories of Moses and David and Daniel with the eagerness that our own young folk display. They had studied Jeremiah more intently than any of us, and they had heard it expounded in the synagogue. The Scripture was a familiar book to them. And what did our Lord do when He met with them? He took the book they had studied all their lives. He turned to the pages which they knew so well. He led them down by the old familiar texts. And in the old He showed such a depth of meaning, and in the familiar such a wealth of love, and He so irradiated the prophetic mystery and so illumined its darkness with His light, that not by what was absolutely new, but by the new interpretation of the old, their hearts began to burn within them by the way.

¶ Christ does not startle us with unexpected novelties; He touches with glory what is quite familiar. It is the familiar experiences that He explains. It is the familiar cravings that He satisfies. It is the familiar thoughts which have filled the mind since childhood that He expands into undreamed-of fulness. We have known what sin was since we were at school. Christ meets us and talks about our sin—and we learn that sin is more exceedingly sinful than we had ever thought in our most reproachful moments; we learn, too, that He died that we might be forgiven, and that there is pardon for our worst, this very hour. We have known what pain was and we have known what death was, and we have known that there was a heaven and a God; but when Christ meets us as we travel by the way and talks to us of these familiar things, there is such promise and light and love about them all that everything becomes new.[1]

5. What was the effect of the interpretation? Their hearts burned within them. "Was not our heart burning within us?" they said. This was the first utterance that broke from their lips in the excitement of the actual discovery. They had been so riveted by His words that they could not think of parting with

[1] G. H. Morrison, *The Unlighted Lustre*, 140.

Him when they reached their destination. "He made as though he would go further," but they constrained Him to remain. And then, while joining with them in their simple meal, as He took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them—whether the action recalled what they must have heard, the scene in the upper chamber before His death, or they saw the print of the nails—their eyes were opened, and they knew Him, and He vanished. A gladdening discovery, but it was not this that made their hearts burn within them; it was the spiritual discovery of Himself to the soul before they knew Him thus.

What set their hearts a-burning was not the mere word of the Lord Jesus Christ. It was the Christ who was behind the word. It was their immediate contact with that personality, and the mysterious outflow of His life upon them, that stirred them as only personality can do, and moved their nature to its very depths.

¶ When the essayist Hazlitt was a young man at home, his mind was dull and his faculties unawakened. But in one of those charming essays that he calls "Wintersloe," he narrates how the poet Coleridge came to see his father, and young Hazlitt walked several miles home with him. Hazlitt tells, in his own eager and eloquent way, all that the walk with Coleridge meant for him. It quickened his intellect, gave him a new world, put a new radiance into the sunset for him, and a new note into the song of every bird. His heart began to burn, and it was not the talk that did it; it was the poet who was behind the talk.[1]

Hath not thy heart within thee burned
 At evening's calm and holy hour,
As if its inmost depths discerned
 The presence of a loftier power?

Hast thou not heard 'mid forest glades
 While ancient rivers murmured by,
A voice from forth the eternal shades,
 That spake a present Deity?

And as, upon the sacred page,
 Thine eye in rapt attention turned
O'er records of a holier age,
 Hath not thy heart within thee burned?

[1] G. H. Morrison, *The Unlighted Lustre*, 141.

It was the voice of God, that spake
In silence to thy silent heart;
And bade each worthier thought awake,
And every dream of earth depart.

Voice of our God, O yet be near!
In low, sweet accents, whisper peace;
Direct us on our pathway here;
Then bid in heaven our wanderings cease.[1]

6. Here we have the first recorded instance of emotions kindled in the human soul which since that hour have never ceased. It was the movement of the higher spirit in man, illuminated and quickened by the Eternal Spirit of our Lord Himself. We must not trust to all emotions; they need to be tested by reason, to be confirmed by experience; they need to be examined as to their conformity to the will of God. But emotions, warm feelings in the soul, are a power, which, animating the soul, urging it onward, enable it to endure, and give it power to act. Intellectual conceptions are necessary, but they do not supply force of action, nor are they the kindling powers urging us on in the higher life. Even the conscientious sense of duty, noble gift as it is, grand as it is in its effects, has not the quickening active power, the animating sustaining force of emotions stirred by the Spirit of God, moving the affections. These inspirations, these movings of the Spirit, these burnings of heart, were what the Greek Paganism, in the midst of which the Church grew up, had to reckon with. The Pagan Empire brought all its power, all its cruelty, all the strength of ages of dominion, to bear on these emotions, on these burnings of heart of the weakest and poorest, even of the child. And all failed. It was these emotions, these kindlings of heart, filled with the Spirit of God, that met the Roman Empire in its desire to extinguish the infant Church.

True religion cannot afford to neglect any elements of man's complex nature; and so it finds room for emotion. That glow of the soul with which it should hail the Presence of its Maker and Redeemer is as much His handiwork as the thinking power which apprehends His message or the resolve which enterprises to do

[1] S. G. Bulfinch.

His will. Yet religious emotion, like natural fire, is a good servant but a bad master. It is the ruin of real religion when it blazes up into a fanaticism which, in its exaltation of certain states of feeling, proscribes thought, and makes light of duty, and dispenses with means of grace, and passes through some phase of frantic, although disguised self-assertion into some further phase of indifference or despair. But, when kept well in hand, emotion is the warmth and lustre of the soul's life. It announces the nearness and the beauty of the King of Truth; it lifts the performance of duty from the level of mechanical obedience to the level of ordered enthusiasm. Often, as in the souls of the two disciples, it is as the brightness of the dawn, which should tell that the Sun of Truth is near.

Lift up your eyes, even now His coming glows;
Where on the skirt of yon heaven-kissing hill
The trees stand motionless
Upon the silvery dawn.

Deep ocean treasures all her gems unseen,
To pave an archway to the Eternal door;
And earth doth rear her flowers
To strew the heavenly road.

¶ "We have made great strides forward in every line of accomplishment except that of original, true, and emotional preaching," said the other, as if waking out of a reverie. "I agree," said his companion; "but emotion in itself is not an art but a gift. The business of the artist is to direct emotion, tone it into a rhythm, and make it effective." [1]

¶ In religion there is, there ever must be, an emotional element. Noble emotion, lofty and purified feeling, is ever the homage paid by human nature to the beauty of Goodness, and the attraction and even entrancing loveliness of Truth. Nature, in her tender and majestic moods of softness or of storm; human nature, in its external fairness of form or of expression, more still in its interior attractiveness of purity or of self-forgetting—these have a power unrivalled in force and persistence of awakening and stimulating the nobler and loftier feelings of the human heart. Sweet to the soul at eventide is the voice of the sweet singer; sweet to a generous heart and an earnest mind the burning word of encouragement, or the supporting glance of affection from a fair

[1] **F. Grierson**, *The Invincible Alliance* (1913), 49.

face speaking the thought of a soul beautiful and loved and strong. Human nature—human nature, so sad, so wrecked, so erring, yet so beautiful, with the likeness of a Divine life, and the air of a better country still upon it, despite the Fall,—this, above all, will waken the human soul, and send the heart throbbing in waves of noble, therefore of bravely controlled, emotion.

What else is the meaning of the high office of poetry, of painting, of music? By what else do you thrill in romantic literature under the touch of the master's hand? How otherwise, but through this response of feeling, come many of those re-awakings of nobler thoughts and intentions which often fill us with shame at shortcoming, and through sorrow and pity undoubtedly do us good? Naturally, then, when the better vision of a heavenly country, when the fairer vision of Him who is "chiefest among ten thousand and altogether lovely," are presented to the human mind, these will kindle our enthusiasm and fire our feelings. This is not wrong—on the contrary, it is right and real, and it may be blessed. Only let us remember that such feelings, indeed, are religious, but they are not Religion; if with them we allow ourselves to be content, we shall make a great mistake. They become dangerous if they are not—to borrow a phrase from chemistry—*precipitated* into conduct, if they do not leave behind them a deposit of more firmly fixed conviction, a residuum of unassailable principle, and a calmer depth of conscientious resolve.[1]

[1] W. J. Knox Little, *The Light of Life*, 125.

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